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THE INDEPENDENT

No 3,802

WEDNESDAY 23 DECEMBER 1998

(JR50p) 45p



BRADLEE ON CLINTON

BEN BRADLEE, THE EDITOR WHO EXPOSED NIXON, ON ALL THE PRESIDENTS' LIES



Mandelson facing censure from official watchdog over 'sleaze'

THE CRISIS engulfing Peter Mandelson, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, over his £373,000 personal loan from Geoffrey Robinson deepened last night as he faced new allegations that he had broken the rules governing the conduct of ministers and MPs. Mr Mandelson is facing censure from Parliament's anti-sleaze regulator for not disclosing the loan, which helped him buy a £475,000 house in Notting Hill, west London, in the MPs' register of interests. Meanwhile, the Tories claimed that Mr Mandelson had breached the code of conduct for ministers by not consulting civil servants and the Prime Minister over the financial aid. In a bid to pre-empt censure, Mr Mandelson yesterday wrote to Elizabeth Filkin, the new Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, setting out the details of his agreement with Mr Robinson, the Paymaster-General. Last night, Labour MPs and ministers were dismayed by the affair. Many fear that it will tarnish Tony Blair's image because Mr Mandelson is one of his closest allies, and they are furious the Prime Minister was not told about the 1996 loan until last

BY FRAN ABRAMS and ANDREW GRICE

sisted he had done nothing wrong, senior Commons sources told *The Independent* that a low-interest loan could certainly be regarded as a financial interest which should be declared in the MPs' register. Ms Filkin will investigate the Mandelson case when she succeeds Sir Gordon Downey in February. Two years ago, Sir Gordon upheld a similar complaint against a Conservative MP, Roy Thomson, whose creditors were urged not to call in his loans when he was in financial trouble.

Sir Gordon ruled that Mr Thomson should have registered the preferential treatment he received and said guidance to MPs should be altered to reflect his finding. It has been estimated that the cheap loan given to Mr Mandelson by Mr Robinson has saved him about £10,000 over two years.

In a letter to Mr Blair last night, the Tory leader, William Hague, said the loan also represented a clear breach of the ministerial code of conduct, which says no minister should accept a gift or service that might appear to place him under an obligation. The code says any minister in doubt should consult the Prime Minister, but in the first instance he should talk to his permanent secretary. Mr Mandelson did not inform either his most senior official or the Prime Minister of the loan until last week. Mr Hague urged Mr Blair to act, to show that the code was "worth the paper it is written on". "Are you prepared to take the tough action needed to restore public confidence in the way your government conducts itself?" he asked.

In his letter to Ms Filkin last night, Mr Mandelson said the loan did not have to be registered "as it was not a gift or gained through my being an MP". However, he asked her to rule on whether he should have disclosed it, "given the substantial media interest". His allies insisted that he had not broken the ministerial rules, saying he did not need to consult officials or the Prime Minister because he was sure there was no conflict of interest.

Rhodri Morgan, chairman of the Commons Public Administration Select Committee, said that while "technically" there had been no offence, many Labour voters would be unhappy at what had happened. "I think it just leaves people with the impression of, 'well, we thought that by voting Labour and having a Labour government we got away from this kind of thing,'" he said.



Peter Mandelson in London yesterday as the affair over his loan from Geoffrey Robinson deepened. Reuters

Exotic in both his plumage and connections

PETER MANDELSON'S description of himself (and the Treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson) as "exotic" yesterday in an interview on Radio 4's *Today* programme shows self-awareness, if nothing else.

It is not every day that a front-rank politician secures a loan of £373,000 from a ministerial colleague to buy a handsome house in Notting Hill. And as with his London home, so with his choice of well-off or well-connected friends from Lady Carla Powell to Sir John Birt, from James Palumbo to Bob Ayling.

So too, with his plumage, which has progressed from the vulpine, bearded, V-neck sweater look of his early 20s to what one over-enthusiastic *Evening Standard* writer last year described as "style God". Contrary to one of the many urban myths, he doesn't have his shoes hand-made, but he does buy the odd £500 suit at the discreet City tailors Couch and Hoskins. Exotic is about right.

Part, though only part, of the fascination with Mr Mandelson's lifestyle (as opposed to the rather different questions of whether the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry should have declared his loan much earlier or accepted it all) is a hangover from Labour's rigorous asceticism of early 1980s - a period Mr Mandelson has devoted his political career to expunging from the party's folk memory.

Several of the previous gen-



DONALD MACINTYRE

eration of Labour politicians were rich like Harold Lever, well-connected socially like Roy Jenkins, fashionably domiciled like Hugh Gaitskell, or enjoyed the patronage of a wealthy and powerful man, like Michael Foot with Lord Beaverbrook. Mr Foot, moreover, recounts in his biography of Aneurin Bevan how freely his great left-wing hero mingled with Beaverbrook in "the strange company" of Lord Castlereagh and Brendan Bracken, shrugging off the latter's description of him as a Bollinger Bolshevik by asking: "Why shouldn't I like good wine? The best I've ever had from you, by the way, Brendan, I'd call bottom lower class Bolshevik Bollinger."

Bevan was a full-blooded socialist, in a way that Mr Mandelson, by any stretch of the imagination, is not. Yet the paradox is that Mr Mandelson remains, for all his many enemies, as tribally loyal to Labour as Bevan was.

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week, when Mr Mandelson became aware that the circumstances of his house purchase were about to be made public. As well as provoking allegations of "sleaze" and "cronyism" at the heart of the Government, the crisis also threatens to reopen the long-running feud between Mr Mandelson and Gordon Brown, the Chancellor. Yesterday, their two camps angrily accused each other of leaking details of the loan. Despite Tory demands for Mandelson to be sacked, the Prime Minister is standing by him. The controversy also makes it less likely that Mr Robinson will resign as Paymaster-General over the Christmas period. His resignation had been widely expected after a string of revelations about his business activities. Mr Robinson has assured Downing Street he does not have any other loan arrangements with Labour MPs. Although Mr Mandelson in-

Branson's hot air blast defeats Chinese



THE CHINESE Government, which bows before no one in the conduct of its internal affairs, met its match yesterday. Even a regime that fires rockets over Taiwan was unprepared to take on the publicity missile that was Richard Branson and his big balloon.

In a day of twists and turns, the ICO Global Challenger balloon was at one point facing an enforced touch-down and dra-

BY PAUL MCCANN and PHIL THORNTON

matic failure. The next minute a London news conference was told the Chinese had relented and Mr Branson was on his way.

This time it took the intervention of two prime ministers - Tony Blair and Sir Edward Heath. The project director, Mike Kendrick, said: "The Chinese say that in the end it was

down to the British ambassador but I think Ted Heath and Tony Blair and all the others have also played a part."

Sir Edward himself obliged and said he was "very glad" if his efforts had helped to break the deadlock.

The Chinese had granted the team permission to fly through a restricted section of the country on condition the balloon leave Chinese airspace as soon as possible. The problems began when the balloon, with Everest looming in front of it, was forced to drift northwards into air space strictly controlled by the Chinese. At this point, Chinese air traffic controllers demanded that the balloon land.

Mr Kendrick said it was too dangerous because if the crew descended from their present altitude of almost 30,000ft,

clouds would cause equipment to ice over, resulting in a crash. Chinese authorities asked the crew to land at Lhasa airfield in Tibet yesterday morning but, Mr Kendrick said, the balloon overshoot and it was impossible to come down anywhere else.

The crew must now cope with having used up a large amount of fuel to keep the balloon free of ice.

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Leak revives bitter feud at party's heart

WHEN TONY Blair gave Peter Mandelson the job he coveted as the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in his July cabinet reshuffle, the Prime Minister knew he was taking a huge gamble.

The move risked inflaming a bitter feud in the Labour Party. Gordon Brown has never forgiven Mr Mandelson for backing Mr Blair for the Labour leadership when John Smith died in 1994. But Mr Blair hoped that putting the two men into the Government's top two economic posts would force them to bury the hatchet and work together again, as they had done until Mr Smith's death.

Yesterday cabinet ministers were wondering whether Mr Blair's gamble had backfired. Both the Mandelson and Brown camps suggested the other side was responsible for the leak of Mr Mandelson's £273,000 loan from Geoffrey Robinson, the Treasury minister and one of Mr Brown's closest allies.

Initially, Mr Blair's reshuffle gamble seemed to pay off. The much-predicted turf war between the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry failed to materialise. Indeed, the Chancellor moved to draw a line under the events of 1994 by telling the Labour conference in October that he was not

BY ANDREW GRICE
Political Editor

after Mr Blair's job. But the day-to-day pressures of government soon reopened old wounds. Mr Brown sought to spike Mr Mandelson's guns by announcing measures to boost Britain's competitiveness in his draft Budget in November, leaving the DTI little to announce in its much-trumpeted White Paper on the issue this month.

Then Treasury sources criticised Mr Mandelson's decision to abandon plans for a partial privatisation of the Post Office. They described his plans to boost its commercial freedom as "rubbish" and "garbage". Mr Mandelson prevented an all-out war by refusing to retaliate.

He was puzzled by the criticism, since Mr Brown and he had agreed that a sell-off would be politically risky.

The language of the "Treasury sources" who criticised the Post Office decision meant that suspicion fell on Charlie Whelan, the Chancellor's press secretary.

But that was small beer compared with the revelation about Mr Mandelson's loan from Mr Robinson. In public, Mr Mandelson said yesterday he had "no idea" how the story emerged. In private, he told friends he believed he was the victim of a "classic sting" in-

volving the Treasury and *The Guardian* newspaper, which broke the story.

Rumours reached the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry last Wednesday that a newspaper had got wind of his secret loan. Alarm bells rang louder when he read a story in *The Guardian* last Thursday saying he was "anxiously awaiting publication of a hostile biography by the *Mirror* journalist Paul Routledge" in the new year. Mr Mandelson feared the loan would be one of the book's main selling points.

On the same day, his private office at the DTI rang Alastair Campbell, the Downing Street press secretary, to alert him to the problem. Mr Campbell told Mr Blair, who was preparing to make a Commons statement on the air strikes against Iraq.

Mr Mandelson's ministerial red box, on which he worked at the now-infamous Notting Hill house at the weekend, contained another problem. David Heathcoat-Amory, the Shadow Chief Treasury Secretary, accused the DTI of dragging its feet over inquiries into Mr Robinson's finances.

Mr Mandelson planned to write back, saying the DTI officials were handling the matter thoroughly and, crucially, revealing that since September he had stood aside from the Robinson inquiry because he

was a fellow minister and because of the loan.

First he consulted Mr Campbell, who counselled caution, suggesting that it would be better not to tell Mr Heathcoat-Amory about the loan.

"It is going to come out anyway," Mr Mandelson said. "Why?" asked Mr Campbell. "Because Charlie Whelan knows about it," said Mr Mandelson. "I don't think I have any option. I have done nothing wrong. I am not going to keep

it private... It is on the verge of coming out."

The Guardian insisted that Mr Whelan was not the source of the information, and Mr Whelan told friends he was "furious" at the suggestion that he had leaked it. Mr Whelan's friends say it is "nonsense" to suggest he would want to damage Mr Robinson, a close ally.

They suspect Mr Mandelson's allies may have had a hand in the story surfacing in *The Guardian* in an attempt to

"draw the fire" from the Routledge biography—and spike Mr Mandelson's guns.

One Whelan associate recalled a pre-emptive strike in *The Guardian*, written by one of the three journalists who revealed the house loan, before Mr Routledge published a biography of the Chancellor a year ago. This detailed Mr Brown's continuing bitterness at losing out to Mr Blair for the Labour leadership and his feeling that Mr Mandelson had be-

trayed him. Yesterday Mr Mandelson admitted he had "no idea" how the latest story had emerged.

But Malcolm Bruce, Treasury spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, said: "Some people will wonder whether this leak was inspired by the Treasury, who are thought to have been 'at war' with Mr Mandelson for some time. If any of the Chancellor's aides were to be behind this leak, that would be a serious matter sug-

gesting that the Government's two main economic ministers cannot work together."

Mr Mandelson, who was "outed" as a homosexual by Matthew Parris, the gay former Tory MP on BBC TV's *Newsnight* programme in October, is also bracing himself for further trouble next month. Friends say he fears Mr Routledge's biography will be "a huge muck-raking smear" containing allegations about his personal as well as his political life.

Gordon Brown, right, remains bitter that Peter Mandelson backed Tony Blair ahead of him for the Labour Party leadership Adam Butler

Tories query ties to firms

PETER MANDELSON was under pressure last night to step aside from a number of DTI responsibilities, as the Tories alleged his links with some companies caused a conflict of interest.

Both the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's connection with the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, and sponsors of the Millennium Dome have led to opposition protests. The Tories have already called for Mr Robinson to pay £37m to pensioners who lost money through schemes raided by Robert Maxwell, because of the minister's links to Maxwell companies.

An inquiry by the Department of Trade and Industry into the Maxwell affair is still going on and although Mr Robinson

BY FRAN ABRAMS
Westminster Correspondent

has not been questioned, the Tories believe he should be.

Mr Robinson was chairman of a Maxwell engineering company, Hollis Industries, which went into administration owing £16m to AGB International. AGB in turn went into administration, owing £1.7m to the Maxwell pension funds.

In a letter to the Department of Trade and Industry's Permanent Secretary, Michael Scholar, the Conservative's trade spokesman, John Redwood, demanded to know why Mr Mandelson had not stood aside from the Maxwell inquiry.

"If, as the Secretary of State claims, he was insulated from any involvement or influence in

the investigations being conducted by the DTI into the Paymaster General, which minister does have overall responsibility for them?" Mr Redwood asked.

Similar questions have been asked about the sponsors of the Dome. Although Mr Mandelson has publicly distanced himself from the fundraising for the project, he has been reported to be active behind the scenes.

Mr Mandelson has held five meetings recently with British Aerospace and GEC, both of whom are expected to be major Dome sponsors.

Mr Mandelson could also be responsible for a decision on whether to refer a proposed merger between the two companies to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Even

greater unhappiness within the DTI has been sparked by the British Airways case.

Bob Ayling, the airline's chairman, is also chief executive of the New Millennium Experience Company, which runs the Dome, and a close friend of Mr Mandelson. BA is a major sponsor of the Dome and Mr Mandelson is the sole shareholder in the New Millennium Experience Company.

Mr Mandelson took legal advice on his role in the BA deal, but has not disclosed what position his officials took.

The Independent has been told that DTI officials expressed unhappiness at Mr Mandelson's decision not to step aside from a decision on BA's proposed merger with American Airlines.

THE MANDELSON loan will be the first big case for Parliament's new anti-sleaze watchdog, Elizabeth Filkin. It may leave the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry wishing her predecessor, Sir Gordon Downey, had hung on for a few months more.

Mrs Filkin, who takes over in February as Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, is said by colleagues to be an extremely tough operator.

Results of her inquiry into whether Mr Mandelson should have declared a cheap loan from Geoffrey Robinson could easily be critical of Mr Mandelson.

After more than five years dealing with sleazy tax men and customs officials as an independent adjudicator on com-

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plaints against them, and for the Contributions Agency, she is not expected to pull her punches.

"I am used to people who dupe themselves, and I am used to quite a number of people who think they can dupe me. That does not mean there may not be some people who have duped me. But I have seen quite a lot of the liars," she told *The Independent* in an interview before the Mandelson story broke.

Mrs Filkin, 58, has invited members of the public to write to her about MPs' probity.

And there are hints that she may dig rather harder than Sir Gordon when it comes to investigating complaints. In her



Filkin: Quite prepared to be seriously unpopular

The post of Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards was set up in 1995 after a recommendation by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, then headed by Lord Nolan. Lord Nolan found public confidence in MPs at a dangerously low level.

Mrs Filkin, who is married with three daughters and who formerly ran the London Docklands Development Corporation, was head-hunted for her new post.

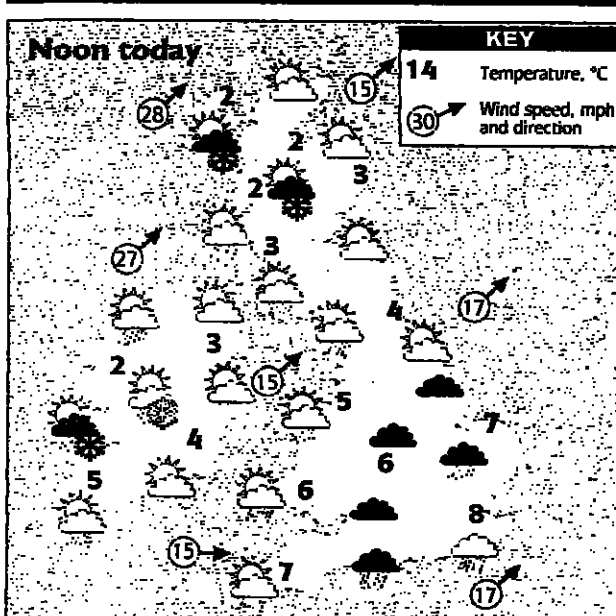
She argues that bar-room gossip might dismiss our elected representatives as a shady lot, but if pushed most people believe most MPs have their good points.

She hints that the House of Commons is a better place since the last general election, when the public showed it was tired of sleaze.

Already snippets have appeared, hinting that she may be a left-winger because she was once associated with the Charter 88 civil liberties groups. On the other hand, there have also been murmurings about her directorships.

"I don't mind in the slightest. If that's the price of a free press I am delighted to have it," she says. "Even if it is hard going and I have to be seriously unpopular, I feel it is a job worth doing."

BRITAIN TODAY

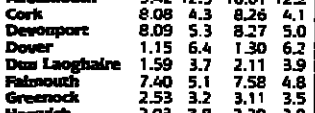


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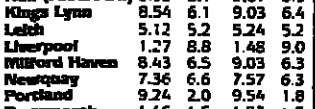
EXTREMES	
Coldest (dry): Shrewsbury -1C (30F)	
Warmest (wet): Manchester, 15.5C (60F)	
Sunniest: Poole, Dorset 4.0 hrs	
For 24hrs to 2pm Tuesday	
City	Temp
Aberdeen	0.0/0.1
Angley	1.1/0.0
Belfast	0.1/0.1
Birmingham	1.3/0.1
Bournemouth	1.2/0.0
Bristol	1.7/0.1
Buxton	0.3/0.1
Cardiff	1.5/0.1
Chichester	2.3/0.1
Cromer	0.6/0.6
Edinburgh	2.6/0.1
Exmouth	1.7/0.6
Flughafen	1.7/0.6
Gloucester	3.4/0.0
Harrogate	0.2/0.2
Hastings	2.6/0.0
Hove	1.3/0.0
Isle of Man	0.0/0.1
Jersey	4.9/0.0
Leeds	0.8/0.1
Leicester	0.0/0.1
Liverpool	1.9/0.0
London	1.7/0.0
Manchester	15.5/0.6
Margate	0.8/0.1
Morriston	0.8/0.1
Newcastle	0.8/0.1
Newquay	n/a
Nottingham	0.2/0.1
Oxford	1.0/0.0
Rose-on-ayre	2.0/0.1
Salisbury	n/a
Scarborough	0.8/0.1
Shrewsbury	1.7/0.1
Southport	2.2/0.0
Southampton	-0.0/0.3
Stranraer	0.0/0.1
Swansea	1.6/0.0
Tenby	2.9/0.0
Torquay	2.9/0.0
Weymouth	n/a
Wynnewydd	n/a

THE WORLD

EUROPE NOON TODAY



THE ATLANTIC NOON TODAY



THE WORLD YESTERDAY

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Tenby	2.9/0.0
Torquay	2.9/0.0
Weymouth	n/a
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SUN & MOON

Sun rises: 08:05
Sun sets: 15:55
Moon rises: 10:51
Moon sets: 20:56
First quarter: December 26

RAIN OR SHINE...

EL NINO caused havoc this year but La Niña, the colder cousin that follows, has failed to live up to dire predictions. La Niña had been forecast to decimate crops across the Pacific region. But Malaysia has said it has only experienced moderate crop damage so far to its rubber and palm-oil plantations. Cocoa crops escaped virtually unscathed, an early Christmas present for farmers who endured a three-month drought earlier in the year.

TRAVEL

London: A41 Finchley Rd. From Stiles, Colgate to Fortnum & Mason, Major works at Finchley Rd. Gyratory. Until 31st December. Cambridge: A1 between Addenbury and Bedford. Construction, lane closures and contraflow. Until 31st December. Birmingham: M40 between junctions 10 (M25) & 9 (Wolverhampton). Three narrow lanes both ways and a 50 mph speed limit in force. Until 1st January 1999. Bristol: M2, J18-19. Major Roadworks on Avonmouth Bridge. Until 1st January 2001. Lanes: M5 between J27 Sturminster and J28 Lymington. Roadworks, contraflow and a

Watchdog's first big case

THE MANDELSON loan will be the first big case for Parliament's new anti-sleaze watchdog, Elizabeth Filkin. It may leave the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry wishing her predecessor, Sir Gordon Downey, had hung on for a few months more.

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Upmarket life on preferential rates

IT HAD long been a mystery. How did Peter Mandelson afford a £475,000 house on a back-bench salary of £43,000?

By STEVE BOGGAN and PAUL WAUGH

And, once he had, how did his budget stretch to Oswald Boateng suits at £1,800 a throw? Where did he get the money for his lavish lifestyle and for expensive stays in Venetian hotels? Well, now we know.

Thanks to the £273,000 he borrowed from Geoffrey Robinson - at preferential rates of interest - his salary went much further. And, once his salary rose to £90,267 a year as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, it went further still.

At the time he borrowed the money from Mr Robinson, Mr Mandelson could have expected a building society to advance him no more than about £130,000 - three times his salary - or, more unusually, £172,000 - four times his salary. Instead, he got £273,000 from Mr Robinson at the Midland Bank base rate of interest.

If he had borrowed the same amount from the Halifax, the monthly repayments at the end of 1996 would have been about £2,172, compared with £1,865 on

base rate - or a monthly saving of £307.

At current rates of interest, and taking into account a £40,000 repayment Mr Mandelson made to Mr Robinson in the spring of 1997, the difference between Halifax-rated repayments and base-rate repayments would have risen to £541 a month - or enough for an Oswald Boateng suit every three months.

The total saving over 35 months may have been not far off £10,000.

Nevertheless, the repayments will still have stretched Mr Mandelson, as he had to

take out a mortgage for a further £150,000 to buy the property and to refurbish it.

At the time, his take-home salary would have been in the region of £2,500 a month - an amount which would have been swallowed up by both sets of repayments.

His mother, Mary, is believed to have helped him, but she is not thought to be particularly wealthy. Mr Mandelson's father, George, left her the family home in Hampstead Garden Suburb and other assets valued at £57,711 when he died in 1988.

The trade secretary's grandfather, Herbert Morrison, a

former home and foreign secretary, left £28,000 when he died in 1965. That would be worth £300,000 today, but it all went to his second wife, leaving his first wife, Mr Mandelson's grandmother, with nothing.

Mr Mandelson, who also owns a £70,000 house in his Hartlepool constituency, is likely to have made some money from the sale of his previous home, a flat in Wilton Square in up-and-coming Clerkenwell - the sort of property that now sells for up to £125,000. But this is not enough to make a dent in the cost of his four-storey Notting Hill house.

With a basic salary of £35,000, MPs can raise a mortgage of up to about £126,000 - which is just enough to buy a studio flat in Notting Hill. For a house of Mr Mandelson's size, such a sum would mean he would have had to buy in a more downmarket area of London, like Lambeth.

Margaret Beckett, the minister's predecessor at the Department of Trade and Industry, has retained a "grace-and-favour" flat in Whitehall since she became the Leader of the House.

No such official residence exists for Mr Mandelson.

Like all ministers with constituencies outside of London, Mr Mandelson is eligible for a £12,717 grant towards the upkeep of his Hartlepool home. The Additional Cost Allowance grant is paid to all MPs who claim it, but unlike backbenchers, ministers cannot use the money on a home in London.

Diane Abbott, Labour MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, said that she was "baffled" by the size of the Robinson loan to the minister.

"I would hate the public to think that all MPs insist on having half-a-million-pound houses. MPs from outside London

get this allowance and they are perfectly able to purchase somewhere reasonable," Ms Abbott said.

"Peter must know the issue here is not just whether any impropriety occurred but whether there is the appearance of impropriety," she said.

"He argues he did not reveal this sizeable loan to his officials and he didn't declare it in the register of MPs' interests because he did not see that there was a conflict of interest."

"But Peter must know that that is not the point - the point is that we strive for the utmost transparency."

What's so special about Notting Hill?

NOTTING HILL GATE is not quite as hip as it used to be. Peter Mandelson moved there from Clerkenwell at a time when just about everybody in the in-crowd was travelling the other way.

The shabby-genteel, rough-edged nature of Notting Hill, Bayswater, Portobello Road and Ladbroke Grove in which once enabled the well-heeled to be robbed right outside some of the coolest restaurants in London, is now rather more genteel than shabby.

By TIM DOWLING

Woz, thrusting media turks are losing their tables to their employers.

Other top-drawer residents include the head of Channel 4, Michael Jackson; the BBC director-general, Sir John Birt; Alan Yentob; Chris Evans; both Dimblebys and the media tycoon Lord Hollick.

Stella McCartney and Jade Jagger both have homes in Notting Hill, as do Mariella Frostrup and Robbie Williams. Bridget Jones's creator, Helen Fielding, is a local, as is the Bridget Jones character herself, although how the latter affords it is a bit of a mystery.

Rocketing house prices, security cameras, residents parking and the bistro-isation of some formerly scary pubs have made it safe for the likes of Mr Mandelson and close friends like Elisabeth Murdoch and Carla Powell.

Trendy galleries and shops including Space, where Mr Mandelson reportedly bought furnishings for his minimalist house, are all within walking distance.

Many of the trendy young things who until recently decorated the streets of the hippest area in west London have forked it for north and east London, worried that the influx of City millionaires is changing the area into an overpriced suburb.

The middle class families who once inhabited the mid-Victorian terraces have mostly sold up and moved west, where their money is worth more. The homey street party held annually on trestle tables in Mr Mandelson's street is now something of a star-studded event.

Local restaurants like 192, Damien Hirst's Pharmacy and Anthony Worrall Thompson's

The Notting Hill Carnival in August is the largest street festival in Europe, an event so fervently supported by many of the newly ensconced local residents that they actually retreat to Tuscany for the duration.

While the area still somehow manages to maintain a degree of cultural vibrancy and variation, most visitors are generally too busy shopping to notice. Paul Smith's new emporium graces an entire corner building on Kensington Park Road, while Agnes B and Bill Arberg's posh handbag shop do brisk business nearby.

Despite a faint air of menace in its less salubrious quarters, Notting Hill's dangerously trendy reputation is now largely undeserved.

Drug dealing and robbery are slowly giving way to lesser menaces like subsidence and location filming. What remains is quite simply a very nice place to live, at least for those that can afford it.

RICH, EXCLUSIVE AND FASHIONABLE: THE STREET LIFE OF NOTTING HILL

JADE JAGGER Actress
Chesham Road, North Kensington

RIK MAYALL Comedian
Oxford Gardens, North Kensington

CARMEN CALLIL Publisher
Lancaster Road, North Kensington

PETER MANDELSON Minister
Northumberland Place, Notting Hill

MICHAEL JACKSON Head of Channel 4
Northumberland Road, Notting Hill

ROSIE BOYCOTT Newspaper editor
Chesham Road, Notting Hill

ROBBIE WILLIAMS Singer
Kensington Park Road, Kensington

EMMA FREUD Radio presenter
Ladbroke Grove, Notting Hill

CHRIS EVANS Disc jockey
Arundel Gardens, Kensington

DAMON ALBARN Singer
Kensington Park Gdns, Kensington

ELIZABETH MURDOCH TV boss
Kensington Park Gdns, Kensington

STELLA MCCARTNEY Fashion designer
Courtney Street, Bayswater

ALAN RICKMAN Actor
Sutherland Place, Bayswater

MIRANDA RICHARDSON Actress
Moorhouse Road, Bayswater

MARTINE MCCUTCHEON Actress
Westbourne Terrace, Bayswater

PETER MANDELSON'S HOUSE
Northumberland Place, Notting Hill

Home from home in Hartlepool

FROM PAGE 1

Last month, causing edgy irritation among some of his closest friends, he was the only cabinet minister to attend the Prince of Wales's 50th birthday party. Yet according to Margaret McDonagh, Labour's new general secretary, he is one of the very few senior Labour politicians who will, if asked, change his plans to attend a party function in some unfashionable suburb at short notice.

Last Friday night, he was in Hartlepool dispensing copious amounts of wine, beer, Scotch, Baccardi, orange juice, pies, sausage rolls, and hot-a-vents, at the Christmas celebration he throws every year for his distinctly old Labour constituency elite - solicitously dispensing gifts of House of Commons badge to the most special party activists like Elsie Reed, agent for over two decades to his predecessor Ted Leadbitter, and showing every sign of enjoying himself.

The contrast between his two homes, the one rapidly becoming one of the most famous private residences in London, and the four-bedroom semi in Hutton Avenue, Hartlepool that he bought for £24,000 shortly after his selection as a parliamentary candidate, underline the two sides of Mr Mandelson the man.

The interior of the narrow three-storey Georgian house in Notting Hill's Northumberland Place, all white walls and, in the ground-floor kitchen diner, gleaming stainless steel work-surfaces, is a temple of minimalism designed by the fashionable architect Seth Price. The Hutton Avenue home, with its large, homely and unmodernised kitchen, its cluttered, old-fashioned living



Peter Mandelson outside his Hartlepool home

Frank Reid

room, lives and breathes Mandelson the Labourist.

This is where he keeps many of his most precious family photographs, the framed copy of his maiden speech in Hansard, the cod issue of *The Guardian* mocked up as memento for his 40th birthday, the front page of *Pravda* commemorating the day Gerald Kaufman buried Labour's unilateralist defence policy at a Red Square press conference, and the Vicky cartoons of his revered grandfather Herbert Morrison. Many of his books are also here: the diaries of Dick Crossman and Harold Nicholson, rubbing shoulders with Lewis Minkin's dauntingly forbidding work on the history of the Labour Party Conference.

There is no sign - as he chops vegetables for a stew, or prepares a breakfast fry-up, with one eye on the ancient black and white television set

on the kitchen table - that he is any less at home here. Indeed it has a particular sentimental importance. It was in this welcoming redoubt that he spent much of his four "wilderness years", two of them nursing his seat after leaving his job as director of communications in 1989, and two of them as a backbench MP struggling to come to terms with the fact that he was anything but a favourite of John Smith, the then party leader.

A recent poll by the *Hartlepool Mail* after Mr Mandelson was "outed" on BBC television showed overwhelming support from the local population, who seemed understandably to have regarded him as a victim under pressure, entitled to his privacy. But even these remarkably easy-going constituents are going to be baffled that he had to borrow this kind of sum to locate him-

self in a house in Northumberland Place rather than stay in a flat that he could afford without extra help.

He is not wholly alone, of course: both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have benefited from Mr Robinson's hospitality, though not on the spectacular scale of the loan to Mr Mandelson in 1996. But many of his fellow MPs will seize on it as evidence that his appetite for the good life has got the better of his hitherto legendary political judgement.

There is no doubt that even some of his close, long-standing, and loyal friends get knotted up about him - saying he has left them behind as he mingles with the rich and famous, and then in the same breath that they know he would visit them in hospital or rally round if they were in trouble.

He may also have revealed something of the outsider

thirsting for life on the inside. And by not sharing with the Prime Minister his means of financing his house, he may have demonstrated a deep-seated tendency to hoard information.

It may even be a sign of his willingness to take a gamble. If he wasn't a bit of a gambler he would hardly have risked the humiliation of failing to win election to Labour's National Executive Committee in the summer of 1997. He may need to show some of the same humility now that he managed to show then.

Part of the Mandelson paradox is an unusual lack of willingness to play to the politically correct or party gallery. Unusually for a hitherto upwardly mobile politician, he apparently doesn't want to be - or think he could become - prime minister, despite odd articles in the last month or two suggesting that he could.

As a result, he is much less willing than most of his colleagues to make concessions either to party orthodoxy in what he says or he does, or to yield to what he appears genuinely to dismiss as a metropolitan and liberal view that he should say the words "I am gay".

He believes he has been working more than his fair share of 18-hour days to see Labour get elected and prosper in government. For the rest, he certainly wants to enjoy himself in the way he wants: and believes that it is no one's business but his own. This is controversy, for him and the Government, on a scale even this relentlessly controversial politician has not encountered before. But then, whatever else, no one has ever accused him of lacking the appetite for a fight.

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Operas in English to get explanations... in English

THEY FORM the English National Opera. They sing every performance in English to underline their philosophy that opera should be understood by their audience.

The only problem is that it seems the audience sometimes can't understand a word of what is being sung.

Now the new head of the company is considering introducing surtitles - the words being sung on stage will be reproduced on a screen. And the favoured solution is for airline-style small screens on the seat in front.

Nicholas Payne, who joined the ENO this year as general director from the Royal Opera House, where he was opera director, has admitted that audiences simply can't make out the English words when a soprano or tenor enunciates them.

In the past the ENO has avoided surtitles, partly because some people would

BY DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

argue that, if the English version is unclear, the operas might as well be put on in their original language; and the company would thus lose its *raison d'être*.

But while Mr Payne is not contemplating performances in other languages, he is examining the prospect of surtitles. One option is that used at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where surtitles are not above the stage but on a tiny screen on the seat in front, allowing the spectator to decide whether to read them.

Mr Payne said: "This is the subject which appears to preoccupy those who write to ENO more than any other. It is an issue which we cannot, should not, avoid. We set out our stall to make opera accessible, we perform in English so that our operas can be un-

derstood, yet people complain that they cannot hear what we say." He added: "I cannot deny that there are operas where too much of the text is hard to understand... Not just the big ensembles and concerted passages in 19th-century opera... But in much of late-19th and 20th-century opera - especially once composers regularly employ triple woodwind, the richness and density of the orchestral sound militates against understandable text."

But as Mr Payne acknowledges in the ENO's house journal, there are problems with surtitles, the main one being synchronisation.

"What could be less theatrical," he asks, "than the audience laughing at the punch line before the singer has delivered it? This happens frequently with surtitled Mozart. Yet even I who deplore such practice have to acknowledge the palpable increase in the au-

dience's concentration since Wagner was surtitled at Covent Garden."

He also claims that surtitles are "the lazy solution - lazy because they undermine the need to improve singers' diction and orchestral balance... lazy too because they encourage mental laziness in the audience."

Nevertheless, while he was at the Royal Opera, Mr Payne agreed to surtitles for Harrison Birtwistle's *Crown*, because it had "an exceptionally dense orchestral score with much high-lying soprano singing". So he has already allowed surtitles for an opera in English.

Mr Payne is now examining the pros and cons of installing the surtitles, and promises initiatives over the next year.

He has already discovered one con for the shortsighted opera lover: surtitles on the back of the seat are hard to read if you wear bifocals.



John Tomlinson and Robert Tear in the ENO production of 'Boris Godunov' last month

Laurie Lewis

Killers of Gardai get early release

THREE MEN convicted of the IRA murders of two Irish police officers were freed early from their sentences yesterday under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement.

Thomas Eccles and Brian McShane, serving 40 years for murdering Frank Hand during a post-office raid in Co Meath in August 1984, left Portlaine Prison near Dublin with Peter Rogers, of west Belfast, who has served 18 years of a 40-year sentence for the murder of Detective Garda Seamus Quaid. A fourth man, Patrick McPhillips, is expected to leave today.

The early releases drew criticism from garda representatives and relatives of the murdered men. Eccles, McPhillips and McShane were all sentenced to death for shooting Mr Hand, but the sentence was commuted to 40 years each.

These men have served less than half their sentences. Penalties in the Irish Republic are in normal times harsher than those for police killers in Northern Ireland, where life terms served tend to be nearer 14 years.

The releases increase pressure on the IRA to fulfil its commitment to weapons de-commissioning. Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach, said the families of the gardai had to be treated with sensitivity. He expected the paramilitaries to "observe all their commitments" under the agreement.

The Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors said freeing the prisoners early effectively meant lifting the protection given to what was an

By ALAN MURDOCH
in Dublin

unarmed force by the government through its normal minimum 40-year sentence.

Angela Quaid-Sheehan, widow of Garda Seamus Quaid, said: "We are numb by the whole thing. I cannot understand why the rush is to let them out now when the IRA says there is going to be no decommissioning... Why should the murderers of gardai be released now when there isn't one gun handed over [of weapons]?"

The family of Garda Hand declined to comment, telling Irish media simply: "There is no point in the family issuing a statement when the needs of law-abiding people are ignored."

The Irish Justice Minister, John O'Donoghue, last week wrote privately to the families of the murdered gardai, advising them that the men's releases were imminent.

Michael Kirby, vice-president of the Garda Representative Association, compared the act of killing an officer of the force to an act of treason. He said: "We would have thought the releases would have been the last thing to be considered."

Yesterday's releases coincided with the freeing of the IRA's commander of female prisoners from Maghaberry jail in Northern Ireland, Gerakine Fennelly, 27, who served eight years of a life sentence for the murder of Ulster Defence Regiment sergeant Albert Cooper in 1980, was the last of the IRA's female prisoners to be released under the terms of the agreement.

IN BRIEF

Man charged with double murder

A MAN appeared in a Liverpool magistrates' court yesterday accused of killing Sharon Lester, 22 - who was found stabbed to death at her home in Liverpool last week - and her daughter, Jade, 2, whose body was later found on wasteland in a bin bag. Thomas John Park, an unemployed joiner, 24, was remanded in custody until 29 December.

Chelsea coach on sex charges

THE FORMER England footballer Graham Rix appeared in court yesterday charged with having sex with an under-age girl. The Chelsea coach is also accused of three offences of indecent assault on the girl earlier this year. West London magistrates' court adjourned the case until 12 January. Mr Rix, who is married and has four children, was remanded on conditional bail.

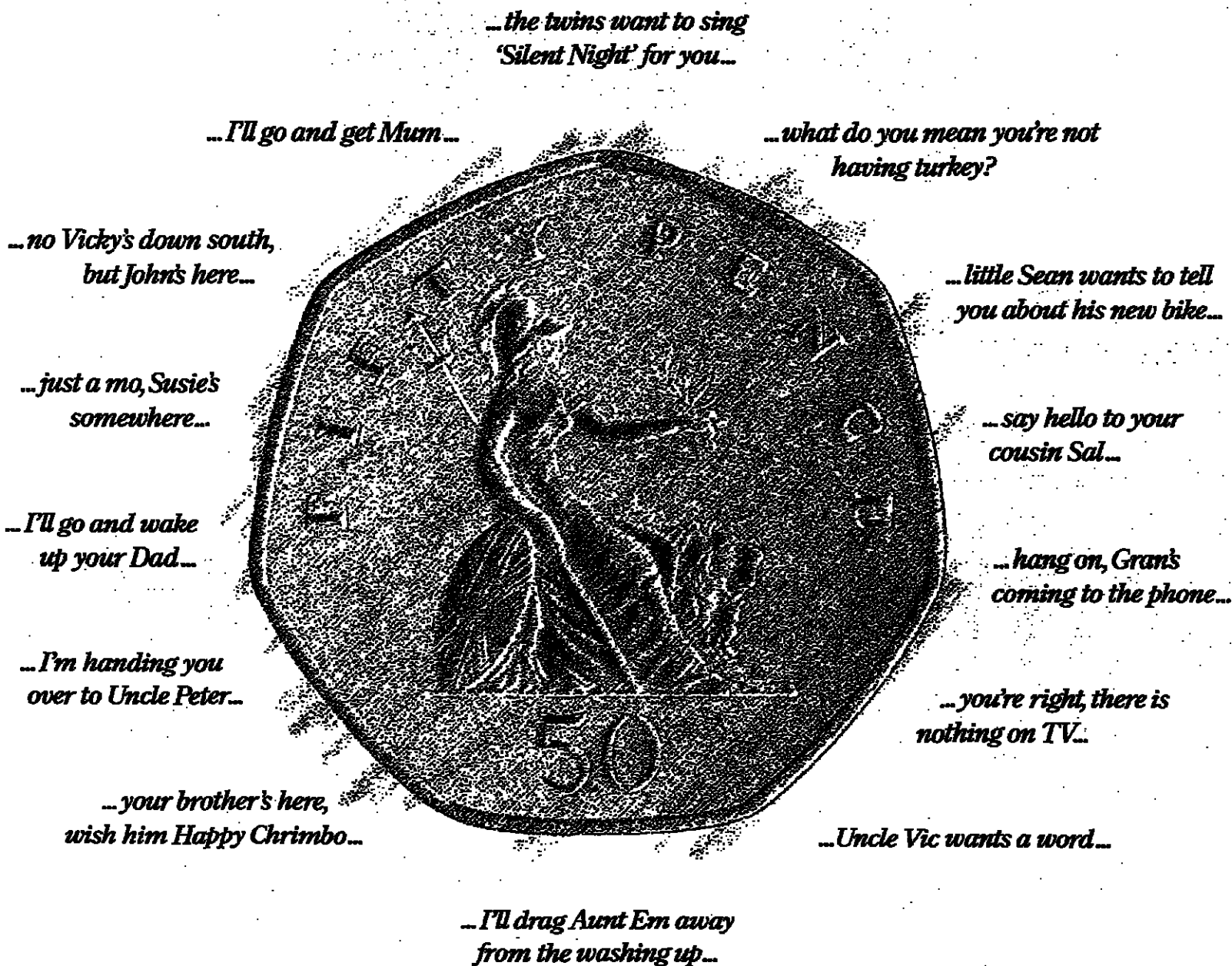
Jury to hear overdose inquest

AN INQUEST into the death of Emma Humphreys, who died aged 30 of a drug overdose after being released from a life sentence, should be heard before a jury, St Pancras coroner's court in London ruled yesterday. Friends say she had become addicted to chloral hydrate in prison.

ANNE MCELVOY

Robinson is a one-man Santa's grotto: a source of trips and Cup tickets

IN THE WEDNESDAY REVIEW PAGE 3



...the twins want to sing
'Silent Night' for you...

...I'll go and get Mum...

...what do you mean you're not
having turkey?

...no Vicky's down south,
but John's here...

...little Sean wants to tell
you about his new bike...

...just a mo, Susie's
somewhere...

...say hello to your
cousin Sal...

...I'll go and wake
up your Dad...

...hang on, Gran's
coming to the phone...

...I'm handing you
over to Uncle Peter...

...you're right, there is
nothing on TV...

...your brother's here,
wish him Happy Chrimbo...

...Uncle Vic wants a word...

...I'll drag Aunt Em away
from the washing up...

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IN THE INDEPENDENT TOMORROW

A new short story by Paul Theroux: 'Gilstrap, the Homesick Explorer'

PLUS THE CHANCE TO WIN A PRIZE IN THE JUMBO CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD COMPETITION

THE BEST WRITING, WEEK IN, WEEK OUT: DEBORAH ROSS, HOWARD JACOBSON, HAMISH MCRAE, MARK STEEL, ROBERT FISK, TERENCE BLACKER, JOHN WALSH, RICHARD WILLIAMS, DAVID AARONOVITCH, ANNE MCELVOY, THOMAS SUTCLIFFE, MILES KINGTON, SUE ARNOLD, ANDREAS WHITTAM SMITH

FILM: ANTHONY QUINN REVIEWS 'STATE OF EMERGENCY' AND CHOOSES THE YEAR'S TEN BEST FILMS

Tourists get list of 'unsafe' airlines

AIR TRAVELLERS must be given a list of airlines and airports which will be unsafe because their computers will be infected by the so-called millennium bug in 2000, a cross-party committee of MPs said yesterday.

The Commons Environment, Transport and Regions Select Committee said the Government must decide by 1 October next year which foreign airlines should be blocked from flying to British airports.

It said airlines and travel agents must give a "millennium bug health warning" to those booking holidays for the 2000 new year.

The travel industry reacted cautiously, saying the MPs were in danger of "going over the top". The Association of British Travel Agents said many of its members had already printed warnings in their brochures. A spokeswoman warned against making it mandatory. "That might be a little bit too strong," she said.

The millennium bug is caused by a failure of computers, which identify the year only by its last two digits, to cope with the switch over to a new century.

The problem is acute in the transport sector both because of the widespread use of microprocessors on aircraft, air traffic control, traffic lights and ships and because of the enormity of the implications if it failed.

The Commons committee was alarmed by evidence that many Third World countries had not heard of the problem. "It seems certain that some airlines and airports, and some

By Philip Thornton
Transport Correspondent

countries' air traffic control systems, will fail to be millennium compliant. Such failures will pose a risk to passengers' safety, and will lead to delays."

The committee said it was aware that foreign airlines could be blocked from flying to the UK, but "we remain concerned about the possible dangers faced by British aircraft overseas, and British passengers travelling abroad".

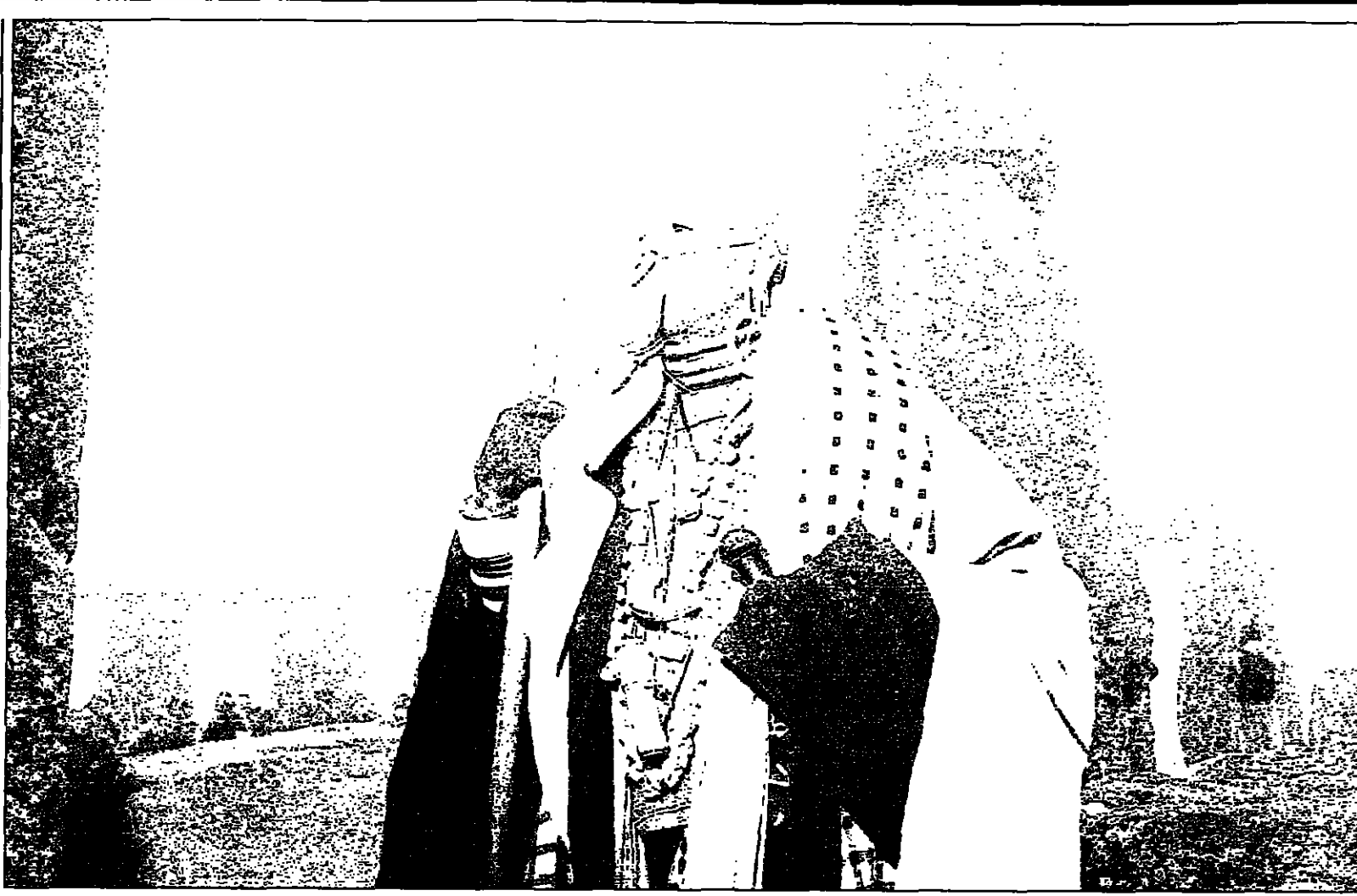
Howard Davies, secretary-general of the British Air Transport Association, said it was still unclear whether there was a problem. "The concern I have is that if you actually suggest there might be a problem, people will be convinced there is a problem. It is a little over the top until we know the nature of the problem."

The International Air Transport Association said yesterday passengers need have no fears about computer failure, as airlines were spending £1.4bn preparing for the millennium.

But Gwyneth Dunwoody, who chairs the committee, denied her report was scare-mongering.

"Everyone has a right to take a decision based on sensible information and we are not sure. Whilst there is an element of doubt, people ought to be told the truth."

British Airways has already announced that it will not fly to a destination if it believes there is a "safety-related risk". Yesterday a spokeswoman said it would reveal early in the new year which airports it would be using over the 2000 new year.



'Primitive' worshiper Lebaaba Oldinyo Laetoli travelled to Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain for the winter solstice yesterday with other spiritual followers and druids

Iona mourns a lost son and three missing victims of boat tragedy

BITING WINDS and unanswered questions lashed the island of Iona in equal measure yesterday as the community buried the first of last week's boating accident victims.

More than 300 people packed into Iona Abbey for yesterday's service for Robert Hay, the only one of the drowned men whose body has yet been recovered. Among the mourners was Gordon Grant, the accident's sole survivor.

"Why were four young people so central to the life of this island taken from us so suddenly?" asked the Rev Peter Millar, a friend of Mr Hay's family, who took the service in the 12th-century abbey.

He spoke for the entire island. Eleven days have passed since the five men capsized as they returned in the early hours from a dance on neighbouring Mull; eleven days of persistent, frustrated searching for any trace of the other three men.

The families of the victims had insisted yesterday's service was for Mr Hay rather than a memorial for all those who died. But it was difficult for thoughts not to turn also to Logie MacFadyen, Alisdair Dougal and David Kirkpatrick, whose bodies remain unbound. For their families the 11 days of searching have been desperate.

"These days on Iona, so close to Christmas, seem so unreal. Days pass but the markers of our ordinary life seem far away," said Mr Millar. "Our emotions and our spirits are overwhelmed in the face of such enormous grief."

He went on: "Although healing will slowly come to our broken community, for generations to come the events of the night of 13 December will be retold many times."

"This tragedy which has touched the lives of so many people around the world will become part of the folklore of our island."

Inside the abbey the congregation sang the hymns "Morning Has Broken" and the song "Fields of Athenry". As the service progressed Mr Millar went to comfort Mr Hay's parents, John and Mary.

Outside the wind had not let up and it howled as six pall bearers shouldered their load and paced into the graveyard, crammed with the remains of Scottish kings, sailors lost in action and generations of islanders. One large inscribed slab marks the site where a couple and their eight sons lie.

Mr Millar said Mr Hay would lie in a graveyard which over the centuries had welcomed "crofters and kings". His family and friends would have to make do with memories of his "laughter and life, friendship and warm heart."

And finally among the terrible black gloom, Mr Millar spoke of the future. "These four young men were committed to this community," he said. "And we owe it to them not to give in to total despair but to move on in hope as a community."

Last UK tin mine set to reopen

By Linus Gregoriadis

EUROPE'S LAST tin mine, South Crofty in Cornwall, is set to be reopened next year by a mining entrepreneur. It was announced yesterday.

Wilf Hughes, managing director of Hughes Mining and Construction, yesterday disclosed that he had bought the mine for £825,000 after agreeing a deal with David Giddings, South Crofty's managing director and major shareholder.

The 140-year-old mine, near Redruth, closed in March with the loss of 300 jobs after it had fallen victim to the collapsing world tin price. The final nail in the coffin had been the Government's refusal to support a £12m rescue package.

News of the mine's reprieve will come as a psychological boost to Britain's poorest county where unemployment levels are well above average. Many local miners believed the closure of the mine, which is now flooded, was the final chapter in the county's mining history.

Mr Hughes said yesterday he was "confident" that the deal would go through and "put Cornish tin back in the world market". Speaking in Truro, he added: "We have studied the geology, we are changing working practices and we think we know we can make it a success."

Mr Hughes said he wanted to eventually reach previous levels of employment and said that around 25 men would be employed almost immediately. He estimated it could cost more than £1m to pump out the 2,600ft mine which has flooded to a depth of around 800ft.

Mr Hughes, who is expecting contracts to be exchanged next week, said the deal should be completed by the end of March.

Candy Atherton, the Labour MP for Falmouth & Camborne who helped broker the deal, said yesterday: "If it comes off it will be absolutely wonderful."

Before the tin price collapsed in 1985, South Crofty employed 750 miners.

Illness kills boy who endured two bone marrow transplants

RHYS DANIELS, the boy who had two bone marrow transplants in an attempt to cure him of a fatal inherited disease, has died.

The six-year-old, who had the genetic disorder Batten's disease, became known nationally because of his parents' efforts to save his life. Barry and Carmen Daniels, who have a daughter, Charly, aged nine, with the same condition, fought to obtain the best treatment for Daniel, which led them to challenge the previous government in the High Court.

Last September, as the conditions of both children deteriorated, they announced that they would not subject them to further painful treatment and

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

the next time they contracted a serious illness they would be allowed to die. They said they believed Rhys and Charly had suffered enough.

Yesterday, a friend of the family said the parents were too upset to speak about the loss. "Rhys passed away last night and they are coming to terms with it," she said.

Batten's disease is a metabolic disorder which takes hold at about the age of three and progressively causes blindness, dementia and immobility, and usually kills sufferers by the age of 10. Rhys was diagnosed at two and his parents believed

radical treatment might save him. Despite two transplants his condition worsened in the past year till he was blind, confined to a wheelchair and had to be fed through a tube.

Charly, who was diagnosed too late for treatment, is also now blind, unable to use her limbs and can no longer communicate. At the time of their announcement that they had given up the fight to save them, the Daniels signed forms saying that there should be no life support for the children. Speaking at the time, Barry Daniels said: "It was agonising, heart-breaking, dreadful, but we have to do what is best for our kids. It is not a decision we ever wanted to have to make ... But

we have decided that when Rhys and Charly next fall ill or get an infection we don't want them being rushed to hospital and having needles and tubes stuck in them. We don't want them to be resuscitated. We want them here at home where we can soak them up in our love and let them die peacefully."

Rhys became the first child in the world to have a bone marrow transplant for Batten's disease after his father spent months persuading doctors to carry it out. Then Westminster Children's Hospital, where he was being treated, was closed and it took further months of searching to find a hospital prepared to carry out the surgery. The Daniels chal-

lenged the government's decision to close the Westminster hospital in the High Court, which concluded that the decision had cost Rhys "valuable, perhaps vital, time". The transplant was finally conducted at the Bristol Royal Hospital for Sick Children. It failed, and so did a second, leaving Rhys prone to infections.

Mr Daniels, who founded a charity to raise money for sufferers of the disease for which he now works full time, said he had never regretted the treatment Rhys had endured because it might have worked. "You don't know until you try it," he said. The couple has a second daughter, Bliss, almost two, who does not have the disease.

Ross replaces Norman. And why not?



BARRY NORMAN had a leather armchair. Jonathan Ross, unveiled by the BBC yesterday as its chief film reviewer's successor, gets a black sofa. And why not?

The former presenter of *The Last Resort* has beaten off a strong challenge from Mariella Frostrup, who presented *The Little Picture Show* on ITV, to land what almost everyone considers the best job in television. The new series, *Film 99*, begins next spring.

The final decision was made by Peter Salmon, controller of BBC1, after watching pilot

By Rhys Williams

shows featuring Mr Ross and Ms Frostrup in a clash of vocal idiosyncrasies - the former's difficulty with the letter "R" against the latter's cigarette assisted huskiness.

It is understood approaches were also made to Johnny Vaughan, presenter of Channel 4's *Big Breakfast* and sometime celebrity interviewer, but they foundered after negotiations with his employer, Planet 24.

"It's a fantastically exciting way of entering the new year," Ross said yesterday. "Knowing

that a large part of my week will involve me sitting on my backside watching movies."

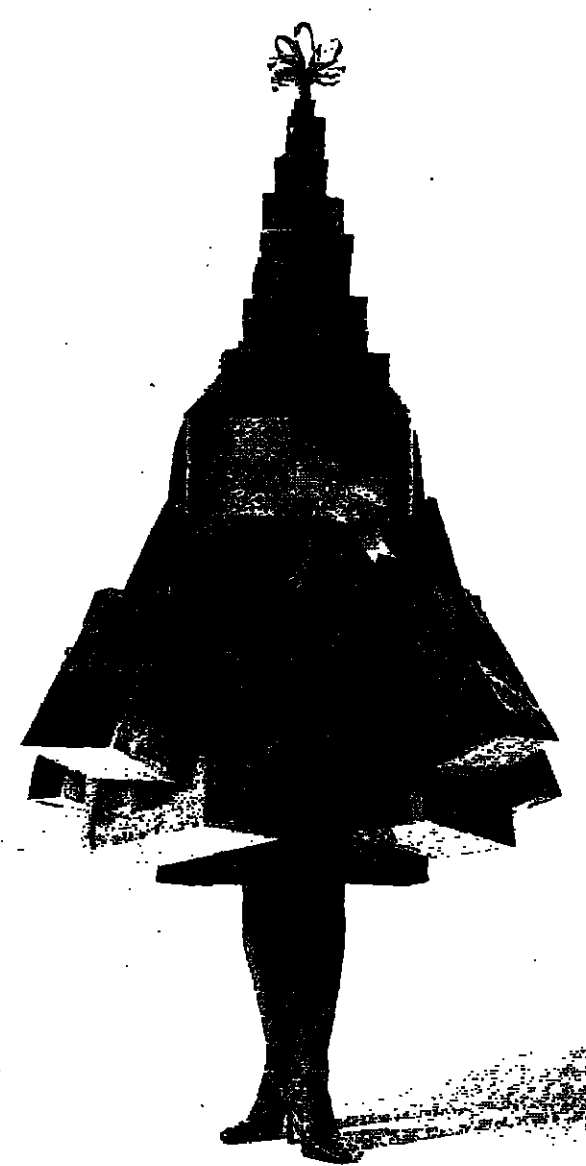
His appointment concludes a three-year search by the BBC for ways to refresh the film show. The corporation was happy to let Norman, who had spent 26 years in the job, leave gracefully. The opportunity finally presented itself in July when he left for a lucrative contract with the satellite television broadcaster Sky.

As well as hiring a new presenter and breaking up the uniformity of the old format with more studio interviews, Mr

Salmon is believed to be looking at an earlier slot to help to broaden appeal.

At 38, Ross is practically an elder statesman of light entertainment. After the groundbreaking *The Last Resort*, made by his production company Channel X, Ross went on to present *Tonight With Jonathan Ross*, *Jonathan Ross Presents* and *Saturday Zoo*. He even sat in for Terry Wogan on the veteran broadcaster's peak-time BBC1 chat-show and is seen once a year gamely attempting to revive the flagging *Comedy Awards*.

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Pupils facing longer trips to school

MORE five-year-olds will have to be bused to school because of the Government's class-size policy, according to a new survey of local authorities.

Officials say the number of five-year-olds forced to travel longer distances because their local schools are full will rise as ministers enforce the restriction of 30 on infant-class sizes.

A promise to reduce class sizes for five, six and seven-year-olds was one of Labour's election pledges. Ministers have told local authorities that no one must be denied a place at a popular school as class sizes are reduced.

They are spending £60m this year and a further £500m over the next three years to allow popular schools to expand with extra buildings and more teachers.

But local authorities say the reality is more complicated. One London authority, Haringey, has told parents that their chances of obtaining a place at a popular school on appeal are likely to be reduced because of the class-size policy.

The survey of 32 English local authorities carried out by the National Union of Teachers challenges the Government's view that parental choice will not be affected by the class-size reductions.

More infant pupils will also be taught in mixed-age classes – a practice that is unpopular with parents and controversial among teachers. Inspectors

BY JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

from the Office for Standards in Education said that mixed-age classes were more difficult to teach and might jeopardise the national literacy strategy.

The survey says building work to cope with bigger class sizes in the first authorities to receive government money has already begun.

More teachers are also being employed but the survey suggests that, in at least one authority, many of these are not new teachers but those facing redundancy.

Doug McAvey, the NUT's general secretary, said smaller classes would bring benefits to children's education. But he added: "Knowing the problems allows both local authorities and Government an opportunity to overcome them or limit their impact. One area for further work is examining the effect of the policy on the number of pupils in mixed-age classes."

About a quarter of children are already in mixed-aged classes, and Graham Lane, chairman of the Local Government Association's education committee, said: "There is no evidence that mixed-age teaching is harmful. Ofsted should end its opposition to it. By 2001 there will probably be very few infant classes of more than 30. It will be a major achievement. It is true that it does reduce to some extent

parental preference." Ministers say 140,000 children started school this term in smaller classes and 1,600 teachers have been employed.

David Willetts, Tory education spokesman, said: "We have asked the Government several times for an assurance that this policy will be delivered without reducing parental choice and without an increase in mixed-age classes. They have never given that guarantee and we know why ... The Government is imposing this policy without taking account of local circumstances."

The Arts in schools and teacher training courses are being pushed out of the timetable by the Government's insistence that teachers concentrate on literacy and numeracy, says the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.

Primary schools are abandoning singing, only a small minority of 15-year-olds study music and teacher training institutions relegate the arts to brief taster courses, it says.

In a report, *The Disappearing Arts*, the society says that one primary school in five plans to cut back music and the same number have already reduced singing. After 14, only 8 per cent of pupils take music, 19 per cent drama and 36 per cent art.

A survey of 33 teacher training institutions reveals that many are abandoning arts specialisms.



Swan research officer Jenny Earle releasing Brockbank, a Bewick's swan which survived being shot in the face, into Rushy Pen lake at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust bird sanctuary in Slimbridge yesterday. Barry Batchelor

Soapbox preacher Soper is dead

BY NICHOLAS SCHOON

LORD SOPER, one of Britain's best known and most popular churchmen, died at his London home yesterday.

The 95-year-old Labour peer had carried on with his open-air preaching, in the finest Methodist tradition, until three weeks ago, when a chest infection set in. He died sitting in his favourite chair, shortly after returning from hospital.

Tributes came from across the political spectrum last night, but they were from a world that the uncompromising preacher was finding more and more difficult to recognise.

Lord Soper was a lifelong pacifist whose final days were marked by British bombs falling on Iraq. And he was proud to call himself a socialist when much of the Labour Party's leadership had come to feel uneasy about the word.

Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, said: "Lord Soper was a fine Christian and a man of great integrity and principle. He spoke with both passion and conviction and won the respect of many, many people, even those who did not always agree with what he had to say."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, said: "As a teacher, prophet, evangelist and social reformer he stood firmly within the Methodist tradition but his gifts have endowed us all."

Much of his life was devoted to campaigning. He served as president of the League Against Cruel Sports and chaired the housing charity, Shelter, in the Seventies. He championed the ordination of women and rights for homosexuals long before these were mainstream causes.

Call for 'grey tsar' to champion the elderly

THE ELDERLY should get their own "grey tsar" – a minister to champion their cause and promote policy across government departments, the Royal Commission into care of the elderly will recommend in the new year.

It will also call for a guarantee of free care for those in old age and a national commission to deal with what they see as inconsistent and poor-quality care.

The draft report, which is expected to be handed to the Government at the end of January, says there should be a division between "hotel" costs (accommodation) and nursing care costs.

This means that when peo-

BY GLENDA COOPER
Social Affairs Correspondent

ple enter care homes they would have to pay only for their accommodation, reducing the chances that they would be forced to sell the family home to pay for their care.

The commission was set up in December last year by Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, who asked it to find a "fair and affordable" way of funding long-term care. It is expected to say that a minister is needed to monitor the need for continuing change. A national care commission would also use benchmarks and a strengthened inspection regime to deal with poor-



quality care in both private and council homes as well as ensuring that inequalities across the country are ironed out. "The care commission could look at standards at a wider level. It would be an all-encompassing body," said the source.

The most radical part of

the package would be the guarantee of free care for the elderly. Under the present means-tested system, which is highly unpopular, all those with savings of less than £10,000 have their nursing-home fees paid for by the state. Those with savings of up to £16,000 have to pay for part of the fees while those with higher savings pay the full cost. This has led to many elderly people being forced to sell their homes.

Under the commission's plans, hotel costs would remain means-tested but nursing and personal-care costs would be free whether a person is cared for in their own home or in a residential or nursing home.

By having to pay only

"hotel" costs, elderly people would be far less likely to lose all their assets, as can happen under the present system. According to a source close to the commission, the change would cost the Treasury between £800m and £1bn each year.

Of this, £380m would be required as new money. "The rest is already in the system and would just need to be redistributed," said the source. "The Treasury is not going to get whacked with a huge bill."

But a minority on the commission believes that the cost of such an approach would be far too high. Added to that, those who would gain the most advantage are the better off, because the poorest are al-

ready covered by the means-test system. The result is that government officials think there will be a "substantial minority report" – or at least a "strong note of dissent", when it is finally delivered.

A spokeswoman for the charity Age Concern said it had always argued that health-care costs should be free for the elderly and added that it would like to see a commission with overriding responsibility for community standards. But she added that the charity would prefer to see the inter-ministerial group taking responsibility for old people rather than one "grey tsar", which "could see old people labelled in one particular way".

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*Discounts on retail kitchen and bedroom cabinets: are off prices charged between 2nd November and 26th December 1998.

IND13A

Divided UN looks again to its chief

Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, is expected to play the central role in attempting to end the deadlock gripping the UN Security Council after last week's 70-hour war on Iraq by the United States and Britain and find a new approach towards ending sanctions imposed on Baghdad.

BY DAVID USBORNE
in New York

ment that would invite Mr Annan to take the initiative to try to find a way through the policy impasse. Sergey Lavrov, the Russian ambassador to the UN, was to meet Mr Annan last night to make a similar appeal for help.

Diplomats in New York warned, however, that it might be several weeks before a new consensus on Iraq could be re-established in the badly fractured council. While there is still

unity among members that President Saddam Hussein must be preventing from retaining or developing weapons of mass destruction, there are sharply diverging views on how that can be achieved.

Britain and the United States are lonely in the council in insisting that the dual approach towards Iraq of the last eight years remains valid. This would imply the return of Unscorm, the UN special commission, and its weapons inspectors to Iraq and the maintenance of full economic sanctions until Iraq fi-

nally demonstrates that it is free of all the proscribed weaponry. "We are not the most popular people here," one British source noted.

Most vexing is the future of Unscorm and its chairman, Richard Butler. Since the bombing, Iraq has repeatedly denounced Unscorm and its chief and said it will no longer accept both the intrusions of its inspectors and the continuing sanctions. "Iraq cannot tolerate the embargo and Unscorm," Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, said on Monday.

Mr Butler, a former Australian UN ambassador, has come under fierce criticism from China and Russia. Both are pressing for his dismissal on the basis that the report he submitted last week, which triggered the strikes, unfairly characterised Iraqi work with inspectors. Britain and the US, however, have come to his support. Thomas Pickering, the US under-secretary of state, visited Mr Annan in New York to dissuade him from recommending changes to Unscorm or the removal of Mr Butler.

The Secretary-General, who saw last week's bombing campaign as a defeat for him personally and for his efforts to forestall violence in the Gulf, has been holding talks with a stream of diplomats from council member governments. He has also created a task force of advisers to consider new approaches to the Iraq conundrum. Leading the group is his under-secretary-general for arms control, Jayantha Dhanapala.

Aides to Mr Annan denied, however, that he was poised to interject proposals of his own

in the council. "He is meeting with all sides and is open to all shades of opinion to make sure that if there is any way of moving forward to an agreement he would be able to help," one senior official remarked. "Different governments are peddling various formulas and we are listening very attentively."

Options may include dismantling Unscorm and spinning off its functions to various bodies, such as the Hague-based Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. France, meanwhile, has sug-

gested a shift from intrusive weapons inspections to long-term monitoring in Iraq and a relaxing of the sanctions regime to allow Iraq to import, under supervision, all the food and medicine it needs.

Yesterday, Mr Butler dismissed calls for his resignation as a "red herring". He added: "I ask you this: is it about me or a personality, or is it about substance? The substance is the disarmament of Iraq. No one in the Security Council is saying anything else. They have various views on how to do that."



Graffiti on a 2,000lb laser-guided bomb waiting last week to be loaded on to a fighter jet for a United States air strike on Iraq. The Pentagon apologised yesterday, saying the scribbling was 'thoughtless', and there was 'no place for religious intolerance'.

France supplied information to help air strikes

FRANCE CONTRIBUTED indirectly to the American and British air raids on Iraq, supplying aerial reconnaissance pictures that helped in the selection of targets.

The French flights, over southern Iraq, ended as soon as the attacks began last week, but the information - including electronic surveillance of anti-aircraft sites - helped the Allies to prepare their four nights of attacks.

The limited French role, revealed yesterday in the newspaper *Libération*, points to the delicately balanced approach adopted by Paris to the latest Iraqi crisis. Although France refused to play any direct part in the raids, it did not condemn them and it placed most of the blame for the US-British punitive action on Saddam Hussein.

This contrasts with a more overtly critical, almost pro-Iraqi, approach taken by French governments towards the floundering US policy in the region in the past four years. It also contrasts with the violent condemnations of the raids on Iraq in recent days by all French newspapers and by all strands of political opinion in France, from the Communists to the National Front.

BY JOHN LICHFIELD
in Paris

Socialist former defence minister, chairman of the defence committee in the National Assembly, and a confidant of the Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, accused the US and Britain of trying to blow up the credibility of the United Nations Security Council, as well as strategic targets in Iraq.

Air raids could not police nuclear non-proliferation, he said, but they could mortally wound the prestige of the UN and its secretary-general and - if not opposed - set a precedent for unilateral US actions elsewhere.

In private, French officials are also extremely critical of the timing, motives and usefulness of the latest air attacks. They have also cast doubt on the neutrality of Richard Butler, the head of the UN inspection team.

But diplomats in Paris say the Jospin government - with backing from President Jacques Chirac - has decided to adopt publicly a more balanced approach. The aim is to avoid falling into the trap of being cast in the Anglo-Saxon press as reflexively anti-American and motivated by selfish, commercial considera-

tions. The Iraqi government has complained bitterly about its apparent desertion by Paris, which left Moscow as its only heavyweight ally.

Diplomats believe part of the strategy is to place France in a better position to play a positive role in the "after-raid" negotiations now going on at the UN. Both Britain and the US have been pleased with the lack of outright criticism from Paris. The French government hopes that, in return, they will be more ready to listen to its ideas about how to end the permanent Iraqi cycle of punishment and lack of response.

Paris wants Mr Butler's inspection team to be replaced by a less confrontational, permanent UN monitoring presence in Iraq. It is also pushing for a further easing of the oil embargo to give Iraq - and the Iraqi people - a bigger stake in co-operation with the international community. Revenues from such a relaxation of the embargo would have to be used to improve the daily lives of Iraqis, not to build palaces or weapons for Saddam Hussein.

This runs counter to the US and British approach, which envisages no solution in Iraq while President Saddam remains in power.

MoD declares Tornado bomb raids a success

TORNADO bombers hit and destroyed three-quarters of their allotted targets in Operation Desert Fox, the Ministry of Defence said yesterday.

None of the bombs that missed hit civilian targets, the ministry said.

Of the 35 missions planned for the 12 British bombers between Thursday and Saturday last week, 32 actually took off and 28 completed their missions.

The figures were given at a battle damage assessment briefing, which gave a hit rate of 85 per cent, including more than 400 cruise missile attacks. Of these, 11 per cent hit the targets but inflicted only light damage.

"Clearly we are very pleased with these results, which represent our current assessment of the combined American and British attacks," said Air Marshal John Day, deputy chief of the defence staff and director of operations. "Taken in isolation, the Royal Air Force's suc-

BY JOHN DAVISON

cess rate matches these overall statistics."

Of the 11 targets given to the RAF by operational planners from the total of 100, six involved Iraqi air defences, two were against command and control facilities, a further two against the Republican Guard and one airfield was also attacked.

This was at Tallil, where Saddam Hussein was developing his L29 programme of unmanned planes designed to spray chemical and biological weapons. A picture taken hours after this attack showed the hangar destroyed.

Questioned on the subject of civilian casualties, officials said no assessment had been carried out because only the Iraqis would have any figures and those could not be trusted.

One of the criteria by which targets had been selected was on the risk of such "collateral

damage" and only military sites had been attacked. Some deaths among civilian staff would, however, have been inevitable.

"We deeply regret any loss of civilian life, but we believe we have been successful in keeping civilian casualties and collateral damage to a minimum," said Air Marshal Day. "As far as we know, there were no weapons which struck civilian targets. None of the weapons which failed to hit their intended targets hit civilian targets."

The operation had succeeded across the range of aims, he said. These included damage to President Saddam's ability to produce and repair ballistic missiles, which would take at least a year to rebuild, and damage to air defences, which would take years to rebuild. The raids had also set back his biological and chemical weapons programme, and hit the Republican Guard units in

charge of these facilities. Together the raids had reduced President Saddam's ability to threaten his neighbours and left him vulnerable to further military action by the West.

"As a consequence of our attacks on his military capability, and particularly on those forces closely associated with his weapons of mass destruction concealment programme, those close to Saddam will realise that we have the ability and the will to target the regime, as distinct from the Iraqi people," said Air Marshal Day.

Iraq said yesterday Western war planes fired two rockets near the southern city of Basra in the first military action since the air strikes, but the US and Britain denied it.

Iraq said four formations of planes violated a demilitarised zone between Iraq and Kuwait early yesterday. Hours later five formations returned and fired two rockets near Basra.

Carey backs the use of force

THE ARCHBISHOP of Canterbury backed the Government yesterday over its decision to bomb Iraq, describing the military action as "a sad necessity".

Dr George Carey rejected the World Council of Churches' (WCC) opinion that the allies' attack was "a profoundly cynical act" and said that those who believed the bombing was wrong had failed to come up with a "satisfactory solution".

Asked if he thought the bombing was necessary, Dr Carey told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme: "I do not know what alternatives there were when Saddam Hussein refused to allow inspectors to look at these factories which were capable of producing chemical weapons."

"I am not a politician, all we have is the evidence given to us by the UN and others, so those who actually believe that

BY CLARE GARNER

this is wrong ... haven't produced a satisfactory solution to say what other alternatives were possible."

He added that it was time to look forward. "What we must try to do is to help the suffering Iraqi people," he said. "People often forget that in the Middle East and in Iraq there are Christian communities as well."

The WCC, an independent body with 332 member churches, has condemned the bombing of Iraq. At the weekend the Pope was critical of the attacks, saying that war would never be an appropriate way to solve international problems.

Dr Carey - who has chosen the theme of "security and insecurity" for his Christmas Day sermon - insisted yesterday that the WCC "does not speak for all Christian churches".



Dr George Carey: Strikes were 'a sad necessity'

In an interview to be broadcast on 25 December by the World Service, he says that 1998 has been a very deeply insecure year for many people.

"Just think of ... Hurricane Mitch, leaving so many people dead and homeless; you think of

Bangladesh and the flooding; you think of the trouble in the Middle East, in Palestine, and the recent bombings in Iraq."

He repeats that he is not a politician, but is kept informed about world affairs by the Foreign Secretary. "When you are a religious leader you must try to influence affairs behind the scenes ... the use of force must only be a last resort."

Dr Carey named the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, author of the *Book of Common Prayer*, as his choice in the *Today* programme poll for personality of the millennium. "Next year we will be celebrating the 450th anniversary of the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* and what the [book] has done for the English language is quite amazing," he said. "It has enriched our language, we owe so much to it. We owe so much to Thomas Cranmer."

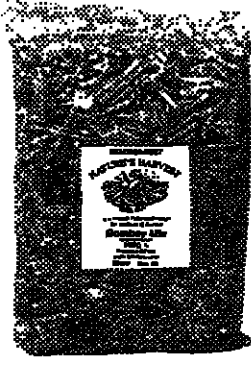
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Bosnia's Serbs and Muslims wrangle over Jews' holy book

BOSNIA'S SERBS and Muslims are engaged in an ill-tempered struggle over one of the Balkan state's holiest and most fragile treasures, the sixteenth-century Haggadah.

BY MARCUS TANNER

Ottoman empire. Since then a Jewish community speaking Ladino, akin to medieval Spanish, lived in harmony with the city's mostly Muslim population until the Bosnian war of the 1990s, after which most Bosnian Jews quit the ruins of Israel.

Now the Bosnian Serbs, who make up about a third of

Bosnia's population but control nearly half the republic's territory, want a third share in the treasure. They are not asking for a literal division of the book, which would mean tearing out more than 30 of the 109 pages, but a third ownership, meaning that it would spend a third of its time in the Bosnian Serb metropolis of Banja Luka in Bosnia's North-west.

The Sarajevo Haggadah has

won an important place in the hearts of many Bosnians in recent decades, a significance that transcends the book's literal value. It is an emblem of the state's antiquity, its multicultural traditions and, in some ways, of the nation's survival.

In the Second World War the Nazi occupiers of Yugoslavia made great efforts to hunt down the Haggadah, which was smuggled out of the

Sarajevo museum in the nick of time by the museum's Croat and Muslim curators and hidden in the hills until the war was over. After liberation in 1945 it returned to the city.

When Sarajevo was besieged by the Bosnian Serbs in 1992 and the museum was bombed, the Haggadah was removed under shellfire and hidden in the vaults of the National Bank, being brought out

briefly for display in the 500th anniversary celebrations of city's Jewish community in 1993.

Thus, at a time when Bosnia's Jewish community is but a shadow of its former self, the city's most famous Jewish text has, ironically, never been more famous or more sought after.

Jakob Finci, the head of the Jewish Community organisation,

is reported as saying that the manuscript ought to remain in the capital, principally because Bosnia's Christian communities, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats, showed such scant respect for their rival's cultural and religious monuments. "They [the Serbs] blew up the Ferhadija, the others blew up the Old Bridge," Mr Finci said, referring to the 16th-century mosque blown up by

the Serbs in Banja Luka and the Ottoman bridge in the southern city of Mostar blown up by the Croats. The two buildings were among Bosnia's greatest architectural treasures.

"Now, everybody wants his own museum," Mr Finci added. "The Haggadah is proof of the multi-ethnicity in Bosnia. It is a testament that even in worst of times, other [people's] values were not destroyed."

Rift hits Likud's election chances

A SENIOR member of Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud, Dan Meridor, jumped ship yesterday and announced that he would campaign against the Israeli Prime Minister at the head of a new centrist party.

Other defections are expected after Mr Netanyahu's humiliating parliamentary defeat on Monday night. During the session the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, voted for early elections and rejected the tough terms set by the government for continuing the Wye peace accord with the Palestinians.

The Likud leader is being assailed from both right and left in his seven-party coalition, by those who will never forgive him for signing the Wye deal in October with the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, and by those who condemn him for halting it before the ink was dry.

Mr Meridor, who resigned as Mr Netanyahu's finance minister 18 months ago, told reporters yesterday: "The country is in a serious crisis, diplomatically, economically, socially, morally and, most important, from the point of view of leadership."

The 51-year-old lawyer entered Likud politics 20 years ago as a protégé of the party's founding father, Menachem Begin.

He insisted that Mr Netanyahu had to be replaced but saw no chance of unseating him within the Likud.

Mr Meridor is expected to join forces with General Amnon Shabak, who retired earlier this year as Israel's chief of staff.

They will decide nearer polling day which of them has the better chance of winning the premiership. Although he has not yet announced his programme, General Shabak is leading the field in early surveys of public opinion.

Two members of Mr Netanyahu's Cabinet - the dovish Defence Minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, and the hawkish

BY ERIC SILVER
in Jerusalem

Communications Minister, Limor Livnat - are hinting that they will try to topple the Prime Minister from within the Likud. Uzi Landau, a hard-line senior backbencher, is preparing to join them.

Mr Netanyahu's predecessor, Yitzhak Shamir, joined the attack on the Prime Minister, accusing him yesterday of destroying the party.

At the same time Menachem Begin's son, Benny, is planning to leave the Likud and launch a party to challenge Mr Netanyahu from the right.

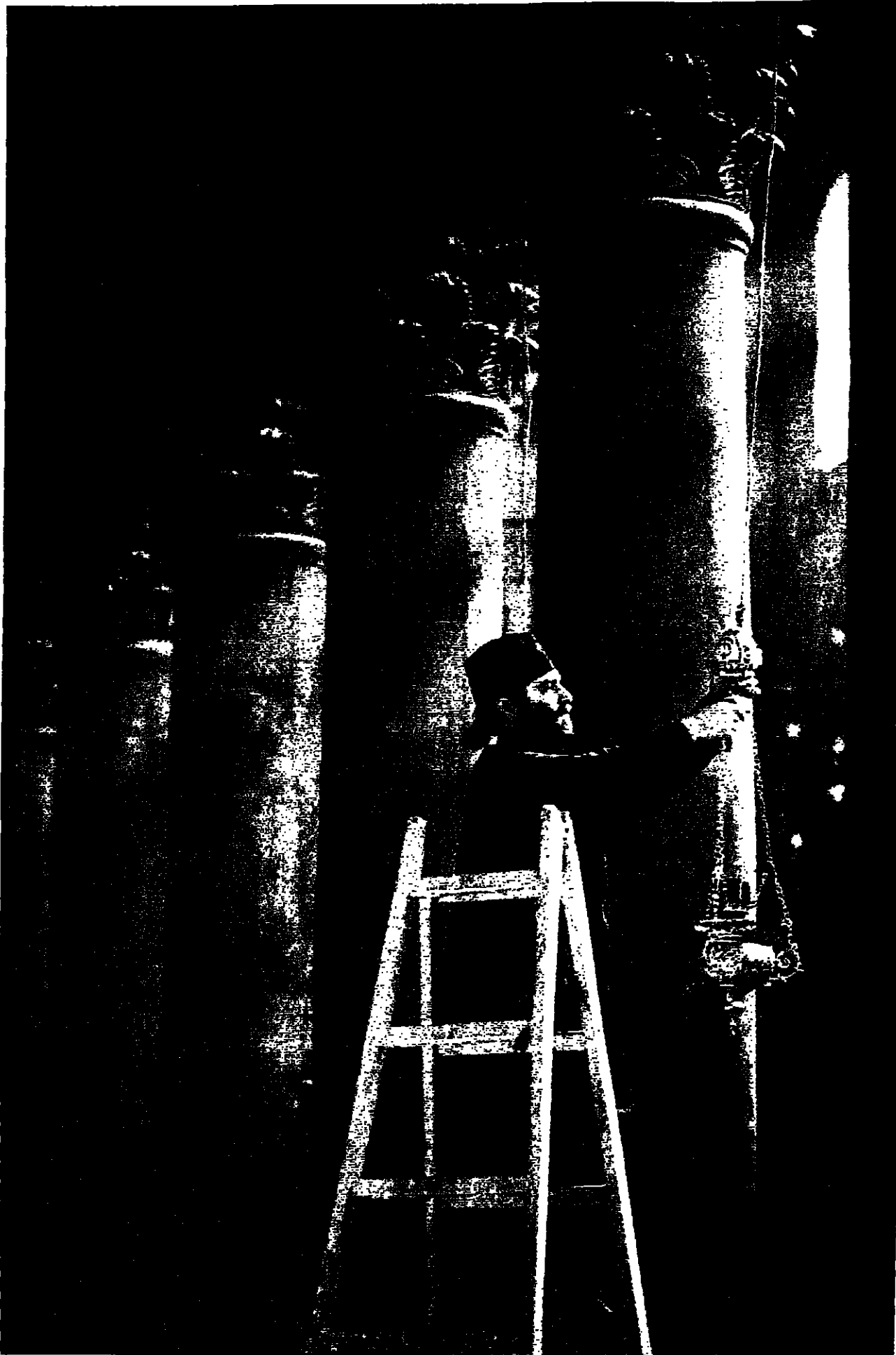
"There is an urgent need," the former science minister explained, "for a political body that would represent those many people who were the most enthusiastic and loyal supporters of Mr Netanyahu in the last elections and [who] feel today that they have been totally betrayed."

In radio and television interviews a chastened Mr Netanyahu said that he would put his faith in the "silent majority" who had elected him two years ago.

"I have no doubt that, when we start the race, the 150,000 to 200,000 Likud voters will give me massive support," he said. "They know very well that only I, at the head of the Likud, can lead the country."

Polls published yesterday suggest, however, that public confidence in Mr Netanyahu is slipping. In a straight fight, the Labour opposition leader, Ehud Barak, leads Mr Netanyahu by 44 per cent to 40, while Mr Shabak enjoys a 13-point advantage (49-36). Apart from the crisis over the peace process, the Likud's working-class voters are angry about rising inflation, running at an annual rate of 9 per cent, a shrinking jobs market and under-funded social services.

Israeli commentators are almost united in dismissing Mr Netanyahu's chances of victory.



A Greek Orthodox priest removes a lamp for cleaning at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Reuters

ry. "Last night he left the Knesset beaten, humiliated, disgraced, friendless, without allies, with no one having a good word to say about him," said the *Maariv* tabloid newspaper said yesterday.

"People who only a few weeks ago described him as unbeatable speak of him today as

a political corpse." The media were reluctant, however, to write his political obituary at such an early stage of a contest that may stretch into the spring.

Mr Netanyahu is a resourceful, aggressive campaigner who proved his mettle against the odds during the last election. The freeze on the

peace process caused by the election is drawing bitter protests from the Palestinians, who call the political turmoil an internal Israeli affair and insist that Israel is still bound to the Wye accord, just as it is to other pre-existing international agreements.

"It's really unfortunate that

the only thing that Mr Netanyahu has decided to stop is the peace process with us," said the chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat. "I think this is a very grave development."

The elections are likely to take place by the end of April. Leading article, Review, page 3

Peace drive in limbo as Palestinians ponder UDI

BY RUPERT CORNWELL

THE CALLING of early elections in Israel has simplified no one's life in the Middle East conflict, least of all that of Yasser Arafat. The Palestinian president must decide whether to declare statehood in May, as he has so often promised, or delay the move and risk a fresh explosion of frustration among his people, which would only play into the hands of Benjamin Netanyahu.

Last night reaction in the Arab world to the collapse of Mr Netanyahu's government was conspicuous by its absence. It reflects one of two things: uncertainty over what will come after the detested Mr Netanyahu, or despair that anything can now resurrect the so-called peace process.

Israel's implementation of the two-month-old land-for-peace deal in Wye, Maryland, stands suspended until the Palestinians have fulfilled a raft of new conditions imposed by the outgoing Prime Minister to placate his right wing.

That was not changed by yesterday's meaningless statement from Jerusalem that it is ready to proceed with implementation of Wye even during the campaign, assuming the Palestinians go along with their end of a "bargain" unilaterally imposed by Israel.

In reality, everything is frozen after Palestinian rejection of the demands set out on Sunday by the Likud-led Cabinet: abandonment of the right to declare their own state, the surrender of their claims to Jerusalem, an end to violence, and acknowledgement that Mr Netanyahu had not after all agreed to set free Palestinians jailed for murder.

An election date will be set next week but Palestinians assume Mr Netanyahu will try to hold it in late April, as near as possible to the 4 May deadline imposed by the 1993 Oslo accords for a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement, which makes that day the trigger for a possible unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"May 4 is a sacred date," said Nabil Abu Rdainah, a close aide of the Palestinian president. "Nothing can stop us declaring a state on that date, and the Israeli elections should not be used to delay implementation."

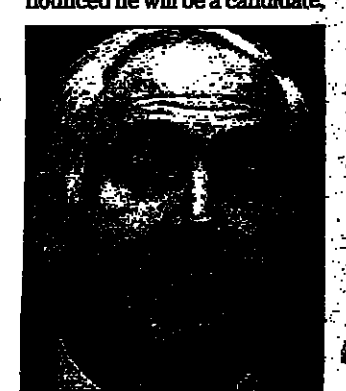
Mr Arafat, not to declare a state without having negotiated security arrangements beforehand. Nor would Israel tolerate a Palestinian army, the division of Jerusalem or a return to the country's original borders before the Six-Day War of 1967.

Even a new government in Jerusalem will not therefore bring the final settlement much closer.

tion of the agreement." In truth, delay is inevitable.

The risk therefore is that the Palestinians, who have already taken violently to the streets in protest at Mr Netanyahu's refusal to implement the Wye terms, will do so again. This would provide new grist for the his tough security platform, just as his razor-thin victory over the Labour leader, Shimon Peres, was probably clinched by Palestinian suicide bombings in early 1996.

The overriding hope of the Palestinians, the Arab world, and the Clinton administration is victory for Ehud Barak's Labour party or the moderate Amnon Shahak, a former chief of staff who has not even announced he will be a candidate,



Netanyahu: Violence may well play into his hands

but, according to polls, would trounce Mr Netanyahu in a head-to-head direct election. This could see a centrist-Labour coalition that might rescind the "peace process".

While Mr Netanyahu vows to annex land around Jewish settlements on the West Bank and in areas he deems vital for Israel's security if Mr Arafat crosses the Rubicon of statehood on 4 May, Mr Barak has not tipped his hand.

Mr Arafat, not to declare a state without having negotiated security arrangements beforehand. Nor would Israel tolerate a Palestinian army, the division of Jerusalem or a return to the country's original borders before the Six-Day War of 1967.

Even a new government in Jerusalem will not therefore bring the final settlement much closer.

Explosive end to crematorium

A FRENCH court ordered an 82-year-old widow to pay £13,000 to a crematorium that was wrecked when a heart pacemaker exploded during the cremation of her husband's body.

BY JOHN LICHFIELD

damaged by the blast. The widow signed a form on which she was asked whether there was a pacemaker in her husband's body. She ticked the box that said "No", even though the device had been fitted only eight months earlier. The doctor did not check whether a pacemaker was in place.

After six years of legal wrangling, the court decided both were negligent but took into account the age and emotional state of the widow at the time. She was ordered to pay one-third of the damages and the doctor - who has since retired - two-thirds.

KEN LIVINGSTONE



Short-term, manipulative, divisive - Netanyahu is a natural for the White House

IN THE WEDNESDAY REVIEW PAGE 4

IN BRIEF

Quarter of Bolivian coca destroyed

PRESIDENT HUGO Banzer said Bolivia eradicated nearly a quarter of its coca fields during the past year in his efforts to end the country's production of cocaine. "This is an important step in taking Bolivia out of the cocaine trafficking circle," Mr Banzer said at a news conference in eastern Chapare, where most of the coca leaf is cultivated.

Yeltsin upbeat despite crime rise

PRESIDENT BORIS Yeltsin declared "Russia is on the up" at a Kremlin award ceremony yesterday - though with the news of a rise in crime since August's economic crisis, it was difficult to see much progress. Mr Yeltsin urged his interior minister to "keep up the fight" after new data showed a sharp rise in serious crime this year.

Retirement move ends in stabbing

A MAN in Hamond, Indiana, was charged with stabbing his wife because she was "not in the Christmas spirit" during their move to a retirement home. Police said William Fagyas, 32, and his wife, Eleanor, 34, were "tired" from the stress of packing for the move.

World's first octuplets 'stable'

THE WORLD'S first surviving octuplets were in a critical but stable condition in a Texas hospital last night. Their mother, Nkem Chukwu, 27, bore the six girls and two boys after taking fertility drugs. One child was born naturally on December 8, the remainder by Caesarean on Sunday.

Bulgaria's former king returns

BULGARIA'S FORMER king arrived in Sofia yesterday to celebrate Christmas in his homeland for the first time in 52 years. Earlier this year, King Simeon II, 61, reclaimed Czarica Bistritsa palace, 40 miles south of Sofia, after the high court reversed communist palace nationalisations.

Mitchell to head inquiry into Olympic city sleaze

THE UNITED STATES was set to announce a new inquiry last night into allegations that bribes were used to win the 2002 Winter Olympics for Salt Lake City.

There have been allegations that "scholarships", free medical treatment and gifts of shotguns and skis were given to members of the International Olympic Committee to ensure that the Utah state capital won the rights to host the games.

The US Olympic Committee announced its own investigation into the affair yesterday, to be led by former Senator George Mitchell, fresh from his role in the Northern Ireland peace negotiations.

Mr Mitchell is chairman of the USOC's Ethics Oversight Committee. He expects to report to the USOC by the end of February. Although his inquiry lacks subpoena powers, Mr Mitchell said it would delve quickly into records supplied by the Salt Lake Organizing Committee and any evidence of criminal wrongdoing would be

BY ANDREW MARSHALL
in Washington

turned over to prosecutors. An investigation by the US Justice Department was also expected to be announced last night.

Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the IOC, has already scheduled a special meeting of his executive board for late next month to discuss the allegations, and the SLOC's ethics committee is also investigating the issue.

"The integrity of the Olympic Movement is central to the USOC's mission and its ability to maintain credibility with the American people and all those who support the nation's Olympic movement," said the USOC president, Bill Hybl.

"We want to ensure American athletes the chance to realise their goals and dreams. For those and other compelling reasons, the USOC must respond quickly and credibly to the allegations and issues," he said.

In a sign that for once there



Juan Antonio Samaranch: Looking into allegations

may be some serious efforts to investigate the allegations, the games' corporate sponsors have expressed their anger about the affair.

The telecommunications company US West, which is an important sponsor of the 2002 games, is furious that its name has been dragged into the scandal. The company has asked the Salt Lake Organizing Committee President, Frank Jolk, to "clarify what has transpired

and what actions the Olympic movement is taking to address these issues."

Coca-Cola has also expressed its concerns to the IOC, "and they assured us they will take swift and decisive action, and we will monitor them to ensure that," said Ben Deutch, a spokesman for the company.

Robert Helmick, who resigned from the IOC and the USOC presidency in 1991 after he was accused of a conflict of interest, said it was common for sweeteners to be offered to IOC members. There are "several IOC members who control blocks of votes [and] are willing to deliver them for extravagant gifts and favours," he said.

The allegations have not centred on Salt Lake City officials but on "agents" who help to broker support. The scandal started when an IOC official, Marc Hodler, said some cities were offering bribes to win the right to host the Olympics.

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History has given Caribbean bananas a special place in Europe, but the US is determined the EU should allow equal treatment for the 'dollar' crops Eric Boyle/Katz

Allies split over banana war

ONCE AGAIN, it is war. Just days after the United States ceased its attacks on Iraq, it has plunged into another conflict, one where the stakes may be just as high, though the casualty count will be lower.

This war is not concerned with weapons of mass destruction, but with bananas. The US says that the European Union discriminates against imports from American companies; but there is no right and wrong in the banana war, just various shades of grey (or rather, yellow). On Monday, the US announced projected sanctions against a long schedule of European exports, with Britain at the top of the list, and if there is no resolution in the next two months sanctions will be applied.

The dispute has its roots in

BY ANDREW MARSHALL
in Washington

the voyages of discovery in the 17th century, when Britain and France both picked up clutches of Caribbean islands as colonies. When those colonies became independent, Paris and London maintained preferential trade links and special regimes for importing fruit. However, US companies became dominant in the former Spanish colonies in Central and South America, often maintaining their position by supporting violent military regimes. They sold mainly to the US, and their exports are known as "dollar bananas".

When the Common Market was formed in Europe, Britain and France maintained special

links with the Caribbean banana producers, while Germany and other countries kept their own free-trade regimes. A special protocol was added to the 1957 Treaty of Rome, ensuring that amid the drive to create a single market, bananas were excluded.

That became a frequent cause of conflict with the US, which contended its companies were being excluded from the European market. Only in the 1990s did the EU try to harmonise its rules. But the US argued that the resulting trade regime still discriminates against its companies, which export bananas from Central America. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreed, and the EU has revised its rules—but not by enough to satisfy the US.

The EU likes to portray itself as a great benefactor, saying that the Caribbean nations need the support they get from banana exports. In fact, the reason for protecting imports from these countries is that they are largely made by European companies. Though the British banana company Geest was bought by Fyffes, the Irish company, Britain continues to side with the Caribbean countries and the companies linked to them. So Britain finds itself in a group with southern European countries resisting the pursuit of free trade, when it would normally be siding with Germany and the free-traders.

The rival Central American bananas are exported by American companies, and in particular the Big Banana itself, Cincinnati-based Chiquita. Carl Lindner, Chiquita's boss, has made hefty donations to both political parties, which means Washington takes the dispute seriously.

The US has threatened sanctions of \$800m (£365m) of EU imports, mainly luxury goods. All may face 100 per cent duties if the dispute is not settled. The US sanctions are aimed at opening up a divide within the EU (the so-called "banana split"), by targeting the southern Europeans and avoiding the Netherlands and Denmark, which oppose the new banana regime. Britain and Italy would be hardest hit, with exports of about \$100m at risk, followed by France and Germany. The duties would apply by 3 March.

The EU wants the deal settled in the WTO, and accuses Washington of ignoring global laws. It sees the conflict as a symbol of US unilateralism, not dissimilar to the claims that America ignored the United Nations during its attacks on Iraq.

"The EU will play by the rulebook of the WTO, which rules out unilateral sanctions," said Nigel Gardner, spokesman for Sir Leon Brittan, EU trade commissioner.

The US says the EU is itself ignoring what the WTO has already ruled, and that taking the case back to the WTO will simply absorb more time.

If previous EU-US trade spats are anything to go by, the end result will be a last-minute compromise. In between, there will be a growing campaign of rhetoric.

New hope for Clinton in Senate

SUBTLE CHANGES of position by a key Democratic senator and a group of influential Republicans fuelled speculation yesterday that President Bill Clinton might be able to avoid a trial in the Senate.

The reports came as poll ratings and stock markets remained unmoved by the President's predicament and the Clintons pursued their business-as-usual round of meetings and partying.

Potentially the most significant development was a statement by Senator Robert Byrd, a Democrat from West Virginia, who intimated that the Senate might be open to a compromise and that the Constitution would allow it. He is respected by politicians on both sides as an authority on the history of the Senate and a guardian of the Constitution.

He said: "Whether there is a trial or whether there is some other solution, that decision must be made by senators and it must be bipartisan or it will have absolutely no credibility with the public." His reference to the possibility of "some other solution" and his call for "bipartisanship" seemed to open ever so slightly a door that had seemed tightly shut. Sticklers for constitutional purity had maintained hitherto that a trial, at least the opening of a trial, was the inevitable consequence of a House vote to impeach.

While Mr Byrd also insisted the decision should rest entirely with the Senate and warned others, specifically the White House, against trying to make deals, the White House appeared pleased.

A spokesman agreed that "the best solution for this matter would be made by senators and on a bipartisan basis" and expressed the hope "that such a resolution can be reached expeditiously, so that we can get back to the business of the country as soon as possible".

Soon after Mr Byrd's statement, four Republican representatives who on Saturday had voted to impeach Mr Clinton published a letter clarifying their intent. They had voted to

BY MARY DEJEVSKY
in Washington

impeach, they said, because "we believe that the President lied under oath and that such conduct was serious enough to merit impeachment and consideration by the Senate".

But, they went on, in what must have been music to the ears of the White House: "We are not convinced and do not want our votes interpreted to mean that we view removal from office as the only reasonable conclusion to this case", and they called for "strong censure as a remedy". All four were among the so-called "moderate" Republicans whom the



Bill Clinton: Still hopeful of escaping with a censure

White House had tried, and mostly failed, to win over before the vote. Their letter lent support to the view that some House Republicans, perhaps even a majority, regarded their vote as a vote to indict, not convict, the President, confident that the Senate would not vote to remove him. It was unclear whether their letter was intended purely as clarification, or whether it reflected fears that the requisite two-thirds of senators might, in the end, vote to remove Mr Clinton from office.

Despite these hopeful signals, however, the White House made clear it was leaving nothing to chance and was working simultaneously on two tracks: sounding out support in the Senate, and preparing the President's judicial defence.

All the Finns want from Santa is a mobile phone

EUROPEAN TIMES
HELSINKI

CONSTA AND SELMA, 12 and 11 years old respectively, are everything you expect Nordic youth to be: fair-haired, blue-eyed poster children for the healthy outdoor life. And what do these two young Finns want for Christmas? New skis perhaps, or some computer games? Not a bit of it. These days, in the homeland of Santa Claus, a pre-teen is nothing without a mobile phone.

"You promised, Daddy," runs the living room lament as this unwitting foreigner brings up the subject. "You promised, everyone at school has one." On closer interrogation that proves an exaggeration—the true proportion is about one in three but, in a sense, Consta and Selma are right. Statistics show that pretty soon there'll be as many mobiles (some five million) as there are Finns.

And that's only the half of it. For Finns are into mobile phones with the same zeal they once reserved for saving their country from the Swedes and Russians.

The gadget has transformed the national image, too. Weren't the Finns supposed to be a taciturn, vodka-sodden bunch, speaking an impenetrable language, producing lots of fish and timber, but mainly notable for winning the Monte Carlo rally each and every year?

Breathe the word Finland to the technologically enlightened these days, and their eyes mist over at the thought of sleek little mobiles that can practically think, and a million twinkling internet screens lighting up the Arctic night.

Not surprisingly Nokia, the Finnish company that has just overtaken Motorola to become the world's biggest manufacturer of mobile phones, has become as virile a symbol of national pride as the Winter War against the Russians almost 60 years ago.

Speak the words "mobile phone" to a Finn, and a broad,



There are nearly as many mobiles as there are Finns

slow smile will spread across his face, as if to say, "You didn't think we were up to that sort of thing, did you?"

Nokia is Finland's General Motors. As with GM and America, what's good for one is good for the other. The company generates, on its own, a third of Finland's annual economic growth; its shares account for half the trading on the Helsinki stock exchange and Jorma Ollila, Nokia's president, was recently voted the second most powerful person in the country; it was probably only the Finns' respect for democracy that kept the Prime Minister at number one. Which is fine, but God help Finland if the mobile phone market ever takes a plunge.

Why should the cutting edge of IT have descended among these dark northern forests in the first place? Some say it is precisely because of this wilderness that Finns have more mobile phones, and more internet users, per head than any country in the world. How else are they to keep in touch across their vast, underpopulated land?

In fact, the phone gives the lie to the Finns' view of themselves. They do like to talk, but not face-to-face.

Thus the peculiar world of the Helsinki bus, of citizens who would not dream of passing the time of day with the person in the next seat, but whose reveries are constantly disturbed by a carillon of mobiles ringing around them.

And there is a more prosaic consideration. Phones are attractive, aggressively marketed (of this year's Christmas advertisements in Finnish papers and on TV, at least half seem to be for mobiles) and transparently priced.

Unlike Britain, where the unit is cheap and the costs, if you're not careful, can be crippling, you know what you're getting in Finland. You pay up front—sometimes £100 or more—for the "terminal", as the companies like to call it, but barely above fixed line rates per unit.

Even so, how do you sell more phones in a country where everyone already has one? Children of course are part of the answer. You give them "Citiphones" which won't work outside the Helsinki area and which cut off after, say, 100 marka (£12). More importantly, you persuade people they need not one but several mobiles.

A top executive of Sonera, the Finnish equivalent of BT, expounded the doctrine to me thus: "People want to work in a flexible way. That means one mobile like a palm-sized laptop, hooked up to web-servers and so on. Then a car-phone, then a smart phone for handling e-mail and the rest and finally a small handy one for weekends."

The mobile, in short, is Finland's entrant in the race for the electronic future, where the telephone, the computer and the television are fused into one. In 2004, the Sonera man told me, the third generation of mobiles would be launched, with full video services. Already, open-out mobiles that offer a keyboard and connection to the Internet are widespread. Consta and Selma of course won't be getting one of those.

But next year, if not this, Santa will surely have a mobile for them in his sack.

RUPERT CORNWELL

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BUSINESS

BRIEFING

Vision accepts £23.3m bid

VISION, the digital camera chip maker, yesterday succumbed to pressure from STMicroelectronics after the European semiconductor giant launched a £23.3m bid. The cash offer, which has been accepted by Vision's management, is pitched at 62p a share - two-thirds of the price at which Vision floated in April 1995. Peter Denyer, managing director of Vision, said that being part of STMicroelectronics would give the company access to better manufacturing facilities and would allow Vision to target a wider market for its products.

Post Office profits fall 14%

PROFITS at the Post Office fell by 14 per cent in the first half of the financial year, reflecting a freeze on postage prices and increased competition. In the six months to the end of September, pre-tax profits slipped to £233m from £269m - the first fall in four years. The drop was entirely due to the Royal Mail, where profits dropped to £115m from £130m in the same period last year. Post Office counters profits trebled to £35m while losses at ParcelForce were steady at £17m. The Post Office, whose chairman is Neville Bain (pictured), is to be given more commercial freedom but will not be privatised. It has also pledged not to raise its prices before April 1999.

same period last year. Post Office counters profits trebled to £35m while losses at ParcelForce were steady at £17m. The Post Office, whose chairman is Neville Bain (pictured), is to be given more commercial freedom but will not be privatised. It has also pledged not to raise its prices before April 1999.

ICI sells £34m chemical businesses

ICI ANNOUNCED the sale of a string of non-core chemicals businesses to Shell Chemicals yesterday, for an estimated £34m, the third disposal it has made in less than a month. ICI is selling its interests in the distribution of ethylene oxide, propylene oxide and propylene glycols - chemicals used to make detergents, brake fluids, polyester and polyurethane - based in Wilton, Teesside. It is also selling a plant which makes ethylene oxide but will continue to operate it on Shell's behalf.

NTL buys telecoms stake

NTL, THE US-OWNED cable group which earlier this week emerged as a possible bidder for Newcastle United FC, yesterday bought the telecoms division of Eastern Group, the electricity utility, for £91m. The business, which consists of a 1,800-kilometre fibre-optic network across the East and South-east of England and 121 mobile phone masts in East Anglia, was put up for sale after Eastern decided it was peripheral to its business of distributing electricity and running power stations.

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100		DOW JONES		NIKKEI		DAX		HANG SENG	
5900	5900	9200	9200	14000	14000	3900	3900	10000	10000
5800	5800	9100	9100	13900	13900	3800	3800	9900	9900
5700	5700	9000	9000	13800	13800	3700	3700	9800	9800
5600	5600	8900	8900	13700	13700	3600	3600	9700	9700
Dow Jones index and graph at 5pm									
INDICES									
Index	Close	Change	High	Low	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)		
FTSE 100	5842.30	-33.20	-0.57	6183.70	4599.20	3.22			
FTSE 250	4763.30	-20.40	0.43	3970.90	4247.60	4.85			
FTSE 350	2748.60	-11.40	-0.41	2969.10	2210.40	3.46			
FTSE All Share	2649.67	-9.82	-0.37	2866.32	2143.53	3.51			
FTSE SmallCap	2031.60	-9.10	0.45	2729.20	1824.40	5.16			
FTSE Floating	1126.00	-1.90	0.12	1517.10	1046.20	0.00			
FTSE AIM	791.50	-1.30	-0.16	1146.90	761.30	0.00			
FTSE EBLK 100	970.11	5.49	0.57						
Dow Jones	9003.01	14.16	0.16	9380.20	7400.30	1.66			
Nikkei	13779.45	-373.50	-2.64	17352.95	12787.90	1.06			
Hong Kong	10322.56	-73.45	-0.71	11926.16	6544.79	3.02			
Dax	4023.38	44.45	0.93	6217.83	3833.71	1.77			

INTEREST RATES									
SHORT STERLING 			UK 10 YEAR GILT 			US LONG BOND 			
6.00			4.50			5.00			
5.75			4.25			4.875			
5.50			4.00			4.75			
	W	T	F	M	T		W	T	F
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									at 5pm

MONEY MARKET RATES					BOND YIELDS				
Index	3 month	Yr chg	1 Year	Yr chg	10 year	Yr chg	Long Bond	Yr chg	
UK	6.36	-1.33	5.75	-1.96	4.51	-1.75	4.36	-1.87	
US	5.29	-0.66	5.06	-0.91	4.67	---	5.11	---	
Japan	0.52	-0.21	0.57	-0.15	1.94	0.02	2.61	0.07	
Germany	3.31	-0.40	3.18	-0.79	3.94	-1.31	4.83	-1.02	

CURRENCIES

S/E

Day	Rate
T	1.665
W	1.675
T	1.670
F	1.675

DM/E

Day	Rate
T	2.785
W	2.805
T	2.795
F	2.815

Y/E

Day	Rate
T	195.5
W	195.2
T	195.8
F	196.2

POUND

at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.8776	1.6451
D-Mark	2.8086	2.9743
Yen	195.98	215.94
E index	101.20	+0.00 104.70

DOLLAR

at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Sterling	0.5961	0.6078
D-Mark	1.6746	1.7887
Yen	116.84	130.58
S index	105.00	0.00 108.70

OTHER INDICATORS									
Close	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Chg	Yr Ago	Next 8pts			
Brent Oil (\$)	9.78	0.35	16.93	GDP	115.40	3.00	112.04	Dec	
Gold (\$)	287.15	-1.80	291.65	RPI	164.40	3.00	159.61	Dec	
Silver (\$)	4.89	-0.06	6.05	Base Rates	6.25	7.25			

TOURIST RATES									
Australia (\$)	2.6352	Mexican (nuevo peso)	14.92	Austria (schillings)	19.15	Netherlands (guilders)	3.0747	Belgium (francs)	56.85
Canada (\$)	2.5380	New Zealand (\$)	3.0937	Denmark (krone)	10.43	Norway (krone)	12.58	Cyprus (pounds)	0.8048
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8048	Portugal (escudos)	278.21	Finland (markka)	8.3120	Saudi Arabia (rials)	6.1249	France (francs)	9.1493
France (francs)	9.1493	Spain (pesetas)	231.79	Germany (marks)	2.7377	South Africa (rand)	9.5576	Greece (drachma)	459.19
Germany (marks)	2.7377	Sweden (krone)	13.17	Ireland (pounds)	1.0963	Switzerland (francs)	2.2255	Hong Kong (\$)	12.62
Greece (drachma)	459.19	Thailand (bahts)	55.60	India (rupees)	64.26	Turkey (liras)	499.652	Italy (lira)	2714
Ireland (pounds)	1.0963	USA (\$)	1.6419	Israel (shekels)	6.5018			Japan (yen)	152.66
India (rupees)	64.26			Italy (lira)	2714			Malaysia (ringgits)	6.1242
Italy (lira)	2714			Japan (yen)	152.66			Malta (lira)	0.6107
Japan (yen)	152.66			Malaysia (ringgits)	6.1242				
Malaysia (ringgits)	6.1242			Malta (lira)	0.6107				
Malta (lira)	0.6107								

Rates for indication purposes only
Source: Thomas Cook

GEC puts £4bn Marconi defence arm up for sale

By MICHAEL HARRISON

GEC yesterday put a sale sign over its £4bn Marconi defence electronics arm by inviting rival European and American defence contractors to bid for the business.

But the German group Daimler Chrysler Aerospace immediately warned that if this resulted in a merger between British Aerospace and Marconi, then it would place a "major obstacle" in the path of wider European defence industry consolidation.

In a Stock Exchange statement GEC said that it had decided to separate its Marconi

division from its civil businesses, which include telecoms, industrial electronics and a minority holding in Alstom. GEC said the decision, taken at a board meeting on Monday, was designed to enable it to exploit the growth potential of its civil businesses.

The statement said separation could take one of several forms. Marconi could be hived off into an enlarged aerospace business or demerged. But the strategy Lord Simpson, chief executive of GEC, is thought to

favour is a straight bid for the business.

Analysts suggest Marconi could be worth £8bn to £10bn. It accounted for about £4bn of GEC's £10bn turnover last year but almost half of its operating profits of £954m and the vast bulk of its £15m order book.

Dasa, which suspended merger talks with BAE last week, said it noted GEC's announcement with interest but warned: "Priority must first be given to horizontal European defence industry restructuring instead of national vertical integration. If this priority is re-

alised [the separation of Marconi] will be a valuable contribution to successful European restructuring. If not it could be a serious obstacle."

Manfred Bischoff, the Dasa chairman, supports an eventual three-way alliance between BAE, Dasa and GEC. However, he regards it as critically important that a BAE-Dasa merger comes first in order to make the deal politically acceptable in Germany.

There are fears that if Dasa is swallowed up by a combined BAE-Marconi, then Germany would be at a disadvantage in

the enlarged group. If Marconi was brought in at a later stage, it would still mean a dilution of the German shareholding in the enlarged group but Dasa would be better placed to dictate the terms on which Marconi entered.

It would also give Dasa a greater influence over industrial decision making, which will be crucial in determining where job cuts will fall. A merger of either BAE and Dasa or BAE and Marconi would yield savings of £90m a year.

GEC said that the decision to hived off Marconi did not suggest

it was more likely to merge the business with BAE than an American defence contractor. GEC has been linked with both Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin.

Nor is it clear whether Lord Simpson would remain with the rump of GEC or join the enlarged defence business. GEC's wholly-owned civil businesses include the telecoms arm GPT, Picker, which manufactures medical imaging equipment, the US petrol pump supplier Gilbarco, and the weighing machines company Avery Berkel.

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Ladbroke sells Coral for £390m

By FRANCESCO GUERRERA

LADBROKE, the leisure group, yesterday put an end to the three-month race for Coral with the £390m sale of the UK's third largest bookmaker to the venture capitalist Morgan Grenfell.

The deal with Morgan Grenfell Private Equity, the venture capital arm of Deutsche Bank, for the 827 Coral shops and two greyhound racing tracks will net Ladbroke a profit of around £70m.

The price received by the hotel and gaming group, which is to retain Coral shops in Ireland and Jersey valued at £28m, was well above City expectations and triggered a sharp rise in the company's share price. Ladbroke shares ended 13p higher at 238p.

The leisure group was forced into a fire sale of the outlets in September after the Government blocked its £360m purchase of Coral from the brewing giant Bass on competition grounds. The authorities argued that Coral would have given Ladbroke, Britain's biggest bookmaker, a dominant position in the £1bn a year UK betting market.

Morgan Grenfell said yesterday that it wanted to boost Coral's returns and was planning to float the chain in three-to-five years' time.

John Macintosh, an associate director at the venture capitalist, said that his company would upgrade Coral's IT systems and boost its telephone betting fa-

cilities. It would also refurbish some of the shops in a bid to make them more modern and women-friendly.

Mr Macintosh said there was scope for savings in head office costs but added that there were no "current plans" for redundancies at Coral's headquarters in Barking.

Morgan Grenfell emerged as the winner after a hotly-contested bid battle with financial and trade buyers. The group outbid rival financial group Cinven's £360m offer in the last round, after Stanley Leisure and the Tote, the two industry bidders, had dropped out in earlier stages. The Tote's offer, at £375m, was higher than Cinven's but it is understood that Ladbroke rejected it because it feared a referral to the competition authorities.

Mr Macintosh denied that his company had overpaid for the Coral assets, which are valued at £337m. "Coral is a really strong brand name and it makes the best profits margins in the business," he said.

He added that around £250m of the total consideration would be funded through senior debt and, possibly, the issue of a junk bond. The remaining £140m would come from internal funds. Securitisation - the issue of a high-yield bond backed by the shops' cash flow - was not on the agenda.



Shares in William Hill, the UK's second largest bookmaker, are expected to attract interest from small investors

William Hill saddles up for float

NOMURA, the Japanese bank, is gearing up for a January flotation of William Hill, the UK's second largest bookmaker, in a deal worth up to a £1bn, writes Francesco Guerrera.

The listing will surprise many City analysts as it comes just over a year after the financial house bought the 1,530 William Hill shops for £700m from the ailing leisure group Brent Walker.

Nomura recently said that it was looking at spinning off

William Hill during the first part of 1999 but it is believed to have brought the flotation forward to exploit the recent bull run in the London stock market.

The Japanese bank is working with its advisers Warburg Dillon Read and Deutsche Bank to whip up investors' interest in the float.

The companies declined to comment yesterday but insiders said that the listing was likely to take place towards the end of January to give Nomura time to

organise a roadshow and contact retail investors. However, they cautioned that it could be called off if the market was to suffer a sharp downturn.

Shares in William Hill are expected to attract considerable interest from small investors. City institutions will also be keen to build up a presence in one of the country's largest bookmakers.

William Hill, which last year had a turnover of more than £1.5bn, controls around 17 per

cent of the betting market, behind Ladbroke's 22 per cent. It is also the largest player in the fast-growing telephone betting sector, with a 42 per cent share.

The disposal of William Hill will be a landmark in Nomura's recent history. The bookie was part of an ambitious string of acquisitions by the bank's Principal Finance unit, headed by Guy Hands, which included thousands of pubs, the rolling stock company Angel Trains and Ministry of Defence Houses.

Wall's faces fourth MMC inquiry into ice cream sales

By LEA PATERSON

UNILEVER Group, has a market share of almost 70 per cent. The commission will focus on the issue of freezer exclusivity - when a manufacturer provides a freezer to a retailer on the condition that it is used only for the manufacturer's products.

John Bridgeman, the Director General of Fair Trading, said there appeared to be insufficient competition in the industry, which is dominated by Birds Eye Wall's.

Mr Bridgeman said: "Over all this is a problematic sector which requires a thorough and wide-ranging review."

The MMC will only look at the market for impulse ice cream - ice cream bought for immediate consumption - in which Wall's, part of the

novation, market forces and fair competition and is not behaving anti-competitively."

The industry was given a clean bill of health by the MMC after an inquiry in 1979 and again in 1983/84.

In 1997/98 the MMC investigated the relationship between Birds Eye Wall's and its wholesalers, and published a report last summer which the MMC said had raised "wider concerns", including the issue of freezer exclusivity.

The new inquiry, which will last nine months, had been widely anticipated by the City, and shares in Unilever rose 12.5p to 657.5p.

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Embattled Sears rejects Green's fresh 340p bid

By PETER THAL LARSEN

THE BOARD of Sears has unanimously rejected a 340p share offer from Philip Green, the entrepreneur, insisting that the bid does not reflect the value of the embattled retail group.

Rea Brothers, the investment bank advising Mr Green, wrote to Sears' board on Monday suggesting that Medinabond, Mr Green's takeover vehicle, was prepared to raise its original 300p share bid by 40p a share. However, after holding a telephone board meeting, Sears rebuffed the approach, which would have valued the company at £520m.

As in the first approach, which was made earlier this month, Mr Green's offer was

conditional on a recommendation from Sears' board and the group allowing him to carry out due diligence. However, Mr Green had scaled back the amount of due diligence he wanted to carry out.

Mr Green said he was "disappointed" that Sears had denied him "limited access" to its accounts. "Denial of the access requested cannot possibly be in the best interest of Sears shareholders," he said.

Mr Green, who has the backing of a number of private investors including Tom Hunter, the founder of Sports Division, is now expected to wait until

Sears issues its Christmas trading update on January 13 before deciding whether to renew his offer.

Sears pointed out that the approach did not amount to a formal offer and that it did not do justice to the value of the

سكرا من الاصل

Simple solution to the ice-cream wars

THE MONOPOLIES and Mergers Commission (MMC) obviously likes ice-cream but it would like a few more flavours to choose from than just Walls. The industry was referred to the MMC yesterday for the fourth time since 1979.

Yet again, the thorny issue of freezer exclusivity - where a manufacturer provides retailers with freezers on the condition that only the manufacturer's products be stocked - will be central to the investigation. Mars, the industry's newest entrant and the main opponent of freezer exclusivity, has argued that the practice severely inhibits competition in the so-called "impulse" ice cream market.

Many small newsagents and corner shops already have a freezer owned by Walls - the dominant industry player with 60 per cent plus of the market - and so stock only Walls products. This freezes out the competition.

Walls argues that it is unfair to allow rivals to display products for free in a freezer which is wholly paid for and maintained by Walls. But



OUTLOOK

Walls could get round this problem by charging other manufacturers for the right to display their products in Walls' freezers.

The simplest solution is to ban freezer exclusivity. Where it does not operate in the large super-markets, competition is vibrant. Walls has a far smaller market share and consumers have a wider choice.

To avoid another MMC reference the practice of freezer exclusivity should be outlawed once and for all. Related practices such as full-line

forcing - where a manufacturer agrees to provide a retailer with a freezer as long as it also takes the full range of the manufacturer's products - should also be banned. There are many other solutions to the problem of freezer provision which don't involve ripping the customer off.

Defence

THE GAME of psychological warfare being played out among Europe's defence contractors advanced on a new front yesterday. GEC put its prize piece of artillery, Marconi, up for auction whereupon the Panzer division of Germany's Daimler Chrysler Aerospace (Dasa) promptly occupied Lord Simpson's lawn. Meanwhile, British Aerospace which appears to control most of the important bridgeheads, was maintaining radio silence.

The consolidation of Europe's defence industry is a big enough challenge on its own. But with the politicians leading, like World War

One general from the back, it is made even more difficult.

The war story so far: BAE is about to merge with Dasa until GEC wakes up to the threat of being left in the cold and muscled in. BAE says it likes the look of Marconi but it does not much fancy its ugly sisters (Hotpoint washing machines, Gilbarco petrol pumps etc). GEC says it will have off Marconi into a stand alone unit.

Dasa's tanks start rolling. It warns that a BAE-Marconi merger could mean the death-knell for wider European defence restructuring. Dasa adds, however, that if it merges with BAE first, then it will happily bring Marconi under its wing at a later date, on German terms of course.

A Christmas truce ensues. The warring factions emerge from their trenches to look out on no man's land. Someone has even brought along a football. Hostilities resume in the New Year.

As a means of maximising value for GEC shareholders, putting Marconi up for sale is an interesting manoeuvre. The prospect of a BAE bid should underpin the price. But if a US suitor, say Lockheed, should enter the fray, then there is only upside.

The problem lies with the politics. The British and German governments want a cross-border solution, ideally a tripartite one that features BAE, Dasa and GEC.

But Dasa fears that if it is seen to be a minority partner without any great say about who gets the work and who loses the jobs, then it will not be politically palatable.

A BAE/Dasa alliance would be presented as a merger of equals (even though the equity split would be 60:40 in Britain's favour). With the inclusion of Marconi, Germany's shareholding would slip to perhaps 25 per cent, which would leave the Germans too exposed.

It is hard to believe that at this late stage, Europe's defence industry will allow itself to be snatched from the jaws of victory. But as many a commander has discovered, war is an uncertain business.

Ladbroke

RATHER AGAINST the odds, Ladbroke's Peter George, has ridden a winner with the sale of the Coral betting shop chain to the German-owned Morgan Grenfell Private Equity. When he was blocked from keeping the business after having paid Bass such a full price, his card looked well and truly marked. Not only did the Trade Secretary Peter Mandelson order a complete divestment, he gave Ladbroke only six months to conclude a deal and stipulated that Coral could not be sold off piecemeal.

From this inauspicious starting point, Mr George has succeeded in selling the business for a 10 per cent premium. The extra £33m he has raised more than covers the interest costs Ladbroke has borne during the 12 months that it has been stalling the business. On top of that Ladbroke has pocketed £40m of profit from Coral during its 12 months of ownership.

The question is what does Mr George do with the cash. As the UK's

leading bookmaker, further expansion here has already been ruled out nor does Ladbroke appear interested in entering the US betting market. That leaves the other main leg of the business, hotels. In Europe, there are not many opportunities on the horizon. In the US there are more possibilities. The difficulty is that Ladbroke already has a relationship with Hilton in the US through its ownership of the brand outside the US. Going into direct competition with Hilton in its own backyard may not be a sensible move when the theory is to bring the two halves of the Hilton empire closer together.

Mr George could do the radical thing and hand the cash back to shareholders. Companies are often loathe to do that since it smacks of the management having run out of ideas. But Mr George might take a tip from Nomura which owns the William Hill chain. Just as one foreign owned bank is entering the betting market, Nomura is cashing in its chips by floating William Hill and recycling the cash.

Crisis fears as Japanese bonds dive

JAPANESE BONDS plunged yesterday, raising fears of a new financial crisis in the region, after the Ministry of Finance said it would stop buying government bonds in the new year.

Trade in Japanese government bonds (JGBs) was halted following a sharp fall in prices, the first time this has happened in more than a decade.

Yields surged by almost 40 basis points, the biggest-ever one day rise.

The Japanese bond market has been unsettled for several weeks, after the government's decision to finance a £110bn fiscal rescue package by bond sales sparked fears of chronic over-supply in the market.

Yesterday's falls were triggered by Masaru Hayami, the governor of the Bank of Japan, who said the trust fund bureau of the Ministry of Finance, which holds a third of all government bonds, would cease

bond purchases in January.

Mr Hayami also hinted that the Bank of Japan, the second largest holder of JGBs, could scale back its activity in the market.

Nick Stamenkovic, chief economist at Bank Austria Creditanstalt Futures, said: "The bubble has burst in the JGB market. Japan's fiscal position is dire. The government has abandoned its commitment to reduce its budget deficit, and is pulling out all the stops to turn the economy round."

The sell-off hit the yen, which fell sharply against the dollar, and prompted renewed worries about the health of Japanese banks.

Japanese banks, along with the BoJ and the Ministry of Finance, are the major holders of JGBs.

Bank shares tumbled in Tokyo yesterday on concerns that the banks' exposure to the bond market could undermine further their financial health.

The fall in bank shares dragged the Japanese benchmark Nikkei index down 373.5 points to close at 13,779.45.

The bond market turmoil in Japan spilled over into Europe, where bond prices fell sharply and yields rose.

Mr Stamenkovic said the falls in the European bond markets were simply "a knee jerk reaction" to the difficulties in Japan.



Masaru Hayami: Bond purchases to be stopped

Fed and ECB leave key rates unchanged

BOTH THE US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank left key interest rates unchanged yesterday, as policy-makers paused for breath after recent aggressive rate cuts.

The Dow Jones slipped lower after the Fed said there would be no change in either its funds rate or its discount rate, currently at 4.75 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively.

The Fed has cut rates three times over the last three months in an attempt to calm the world's nervous financial markets.

Meanwhile in Frankfurt, Wim Duisenberg, the ECB president who earlier this month co-ordinated a surprise cut in European rates, said he saw no immediate need for further rate reductions.

As expected, the ECB set its initial benchmark interest rate for the countries which will adopt the euro in January at 3 per cent.

Mr Duisenberg said: "This should be seen as a clear indication that the ECB does not want to give any signal for further easing in the fore-

seeable future." However, Mr Duisenberg did announce temporary changes to two other European interest rates, a move designed to inject liquidity into the banking system during the first few weeks of the euro's life. The rate changes should help eliminate volatility in the financial markets.

Between 4 January and 21 January, the ECB's emergency borrowing rate will be 3.25 per cent and its deposit rate will be 2.75 per cent. After 21 January these rates will change to 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.

Sharda Persaud at Paribas said: "This is an ultra-cautious move by the European Central Bank, which is a little worried about volatility in the market at the beginning of the year. It's probably not really necessary, it's simply a precautionary step."

Data released in France and Germany yesterday revealed further sharp falls in factory gate prices on the Continent.

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THE INDEPENDENT
Wednesday 23 December 1998

Fund	12/97	11/97	10/97	9/97	8/97	7/97	6/97	5/97	4/97	3/97	2/97	1/97	12/96	11/96	10/96	9/96	8/96	7/96	6/96	5/96	4/96	3/96	2/96	1/96	12/95	11/95	10/95	9/95	8/95	7/95	6/95	5/95	4/95	3/95	2/95	1/95	12/94	11/94	10/94	9/94	8/94	7/94	6/94	5/94	4/94	3/94	2/94	1/94	12/93	11/93	10/93	9/93	8/93	7/93	6/93	5/93	4/93	3/93	2/93	1/93	12/92	11/92	10/92	9/92	8/92	7/92	6/92	5/92	4/92	3/92	2/92	1/92	12/91	11/91	10/91	9/91	8/91	7/91	6/91	5/91	4/91	3/91	2/91	1/91	12/90	11/90	10/90	9/90	8/90	7/90	6/90	5/90	4/90	3/90	2/90	1/90	12/89	11/89	10/89	9/89	8/89	7/89	6/89	5/89	4/89	3/89	2/89	1/89	12/88	11/88	10/88	9/88	8/88	7/88	6/88	5/88	4/88	3/88	2/88	1/88	12/87	11/87	10/87	9/87	8/87	7/87	6/87	5/87	4/87	3/87	2/87	1/87	12/86	11/86	10/86	9/86	8/86	7/86	6/86	5/86	4/86	3/86	2/86	1/86	12/85	11/85	10/85	9/85	8/85	7/85	6/85	5/85	4/85	3/85	2/85	1/85	12/84	11/84	10/84	9/84	8/84	7/84	6/84	5/84	4/84	3/84	2/84	1/84	12/83	11/83	10/83	9/83	8/83	7/83	6/83	5/83	4/83	3/83	2/83	1/83	12/82	11/82	10/82	9/82	8/82	7/82	6/82	5/82	4/82	3/82	2/82	1/82	12/81	11/81	10/81	9/81	8/81	7/81	6/81	5/81	4/81	3/81	2/81	1/81	12/80	11/80	10/80	9/80	8/80	7/80	6/80	5/80	4/80	3/80	2/80	1/80	12/79	11/79	10/79	9/79	8/79	7/79	6/79	5/79	4/79	3/79	2/79	1/79	12/78	11/78	10/78	9/78	8/78	7/78	6/78	5/78	4/78	3/78	2/78	1/78	12/77	11/77	10/77	9/77	8/77	7/77	6/77	5/77	4/77	3/77	2/77	1/77	12/76	11/76	10/76	9/76	8/76	7/76	6/76	5/76	4/76	3/76	2/76	1/76	12/75	11/75	10/75	9/75	8/75	7/75	6/75	5/75	4/75	3/75	2/75	1/75	12/74	11/74	10/74	9/74	8/74	7/74	6/74	5/74	4/74	3/74	2/74	1/74	12/73	11/73	10/73	9/73	8/73	7/73	6/73	5/73	4/73	3/73	2/73	1/73	12/72	11/72	10/72	9/72	8/72	7/72	6/72	5/72	4/72	3/72	2/72	1/72	12/71	11/71	10/71	9/71	8/71	7/71	6/71	5/71	4/71	3/71	2/71	1/71	12/70	11/70	10/70	9/70	8/70	7/70	6/70	5/70	4/70	3/70	2/70	1/70	12/69	11/69	10/69	9/69	8/69	7/69	6/69	5/69	4/69	3/69	2/69	1/69	12/68	11/68	10/68	9/68	8/68	7/68	6/68	5/68	4/68	3/68	2/68	1/68	12/67	11/67	10/67	9/67	8/67	7/67	6/67	5/67	4/67	3/67	2/67	1/67	12/66	11/66	10/66	9/66	8/66	7/66	6/66	5/66	4/66	3/66	2/66	1/66	12/65	11/65	10/65	9/65	8/65	7/65	6/65	5/65	4/65	3/65	2/65	1/65	12/64	11/64	10/64	9/64	8/64	7/64	6/64	5/64	4/64	3/64	2/64	1/64	12/63	11/63	10/63	9/63	8/63	7/63	6/63	5/63	4/63	3/63	2/63	1/63	12/62	11/62	10/62	9/62	8/62	7/62	6/62	5/62	4/62	3/62	2/62	1/62	12/61	11/61	10/61	9/61	8/61	7/61	6/61	5/61	4/61	3/61	2/61	1/61	12/60	11/60	10/60	9/60	8/60	7/60	6/60	5/60	4/60	3/60	2/60	1/60	12/59	11/59	10/59	9/59	8/59	7/59	6/59	5/59	4/59	3/59	2/59	1/59	12/58	11/58	10/58	9/58	8/58	7/58	6/58	5/58	4/58	3/58	2/58	1/58	12/57	11/57	10/57	9/57	8/57	7/57	6/57	5/57	4/57	3/57	2/57	1/57	12/56	11/56	10/56	9/56	8/56	7/56	6/56	5/56	4/56	3/56	2/56	1/56	12/55	11/55	10/55	9/55	8/55	7/55	6/55	5/55	4/55	3/55	2/55	1/55	12/54	11/54	10/54	9/54	8/54	7/54	6/54	5/54	4/54	3/54	2/54	1/54	12/53	11/53	10/53	9/53	8/53	7/53	6/53	5/53	4/53	3/53	2/53	1/53	12/52	11/52	10/52	9/52	8/52	7/52	6/52	5/52	4/52	3/52	2/52	1/52	12/51	11/51	10/51	9/51	8/51	7/51	6/51	5/51	4/51	3/51	2/51	1/51	12/50	11/50	10/50	9/50	8/50	7/50	6/50	5/50	4/50	3/50	2/50	1/50	12/49	11/49	10/49	9/49	8/49	7/49	6/49	5/49	4/49	3/49	2/49	1/49	12/48	11/48	10/48	9/48	8/48	7/48	6/48	5/48	4/48	3/48	2/48	1/48	12/47	11/47	10/47	9/47	8/47	7/47	6/47	5/47	4/47	3/47	2/47	1/47	12/46	11/46	10/46	9/46	8/46	7/46	6/46	5/46	4/46	3/46	2/46	1/46	12/45	11/45	10/45	9/45	8/45	7/45	6/45	5/45	4/45	3/45	2/45	1/45	12/44	11/44	10/44	9/44	8/44	7/44	6/44	5/44	4/44	3/44	2/44	1/44	12/43	11/43	10/43	9/43	8/43	7/43	6/43	5/43	4/43	3/43	2/43	1/43	12/42	11/42	10/42	9/42	8/42	7/42	6/42	5/42	4/42	3/42	2/42	1/42	12/41	11/41	10/41	9/41	8/41	7/41	6/41	5/41	4/41	3/41	2/41	1/41	12/40	11/40	10/40	9/40	8/40	7/40	6/40	5/40	4/40	3/40	2/40	1/40	12/39	11/39	10/39	9/39	8/39	7/39	6/39	5/39	4/39	3/39	2/39	1/39	12/38	11/38	10/38	9/38	8/38	7/38	6/38	5/38	4/38	3/38	2/38	1/38	12/37	11/37	10/37	9/37	8/37	7/37	6/37	5/37	4/37	3/37	2/37	1/37	12/36	11/36	10/36	9/36	8/36	7/36	6/36	5/36	4/36	3/36	2/36	1/36	12/35	11/35	10/35	9/35	8/35	7/35	6/35	5/35	4/35	3/35	2/35	1/35	12/34	11/34	10/34	9/34	8/34	7/34	6/34	5/34	4/34	3/34	2/34	1/34	12/33	11/33	10/33	9/33	8/33	7/33	6/33	5/33	4/33	3/33	2/33	1/33	12/32	11/32	10/32	9/32	8/32	7/32	6/32	5/32	4/32	3/32	2/32	1/32	12/31	11/31	10/31	9/31	8/31	7/31	6/31	5/31	4/31	3/31	2/31	1/31	12/30	11/30	10/30	9/30	8/30	7/30	6/30	5/30	4/30	3/30	2/30	1/30	12/29	11/29	10/29	9/29	8/29	7/29	6/29	5/29	4/29	3/29	2/29	1/29	12/28	11/28	10/28	9/28	8/28	7/28	6/28	5/28	4/28	3/28	2/28	1/28	12/27	11/27	10/27	9/27	8/27	7/27	6/27	5/27	4/27	3/27	2/27	1/27	12/26	11/26	10/26	9/26	8/26	7/26	6/26	5/26	4/26	3/26	2/26	1/26	12/25	11/25	10/25	9/25	8/25	7/25	6/25	5/25	4/25	3/25	2/25	1/25	12/24	11/24	10/24	9/24	8/24	7/24	6/24	5/24	4/24	3/24	2/24	1/24	12/23	11/23	10/23	9/23	8/23	7/23	6/23	5/23	4/23	3/23	2/23	1/23	12/22	11/22	10/22	9/22	8/22	7/22	6/22	5/22	4/22	3/22	2/22	1/22	12/21	11/21	10/21	9/21	8/21	7/21	6/21	5/21	4/21	3/21	2/21	1/21	12/20	11/20	10/20	9/20	8/20	7/20	6/20	5/20	4/20	3/20	2/20	1/20	12/19	11/19	10/19	9/19	8/19	7/19	6/19	5/19	4/19	3/19	2/19	1/19	12/18	11/18	10/18	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SPORT

Return to France 98: Mystery still surrounds the inability of the world's finest player to perform in the final

Making plans for Ronaldo



RICHARD WILLIAMS

IN FRONT of 67,000 people, Ronaldo is doing what only he can do. It's 18 minutes into the game, no score. The Sunday worshippers at the cathedral of San Siro catch their breath as he takes the dropping ball on his right thigh, cushioning it so that he can turn as it falls. He's on the half-way line, wide on the left. Roma's zonal defence is stranded by the counter-attack, strung across the pitch. Only Fabio Petrucci, the reserve stopper, stands in Ronaldo's way, 10 yards closer to goal than the man with the ball.

Ronaldo's acceleration launches him on a run angled to wards the corner of the penalty area. The feet splay out, pushing hard into the turf as raw energy is converted into momentum with minimal effort. Two touches with his right boot, one with his left. He's travelling in a straight line, but his body seems to be moving both ways at once.

There's no delicacy or elegance about Ronaldo. He's not like Suker or Bergkamp, who have stilettoes in their feet. There's no romantic flourish, either. He doesn't score with a loss of the mane, like Batistuta or Salas. He's all about efficiency, about the trained focusing and transference of power.

Petrucci tries to keep cool, backing off, hoping to jockey his opponent. But within an instant the Brazilian has made his move, whipping by on the outside with the ball on his bootlaces, minimising the loss of time by staying as close to his opponent as possible. He is almost clear when - BANG! - the defender's desperate boot catches him and he hits the ground a couple of yards outside the area, not rolling in spectacular agony but ominously still, screaming out with pain and fear but moving only to grasp the most scrutinised piece of anatomy in Italy: Ronaldo's right knee.

"I LEARN'T a lot of things in 1998," the 22-year-old had said before the match, "and most of all I learnt how to suffer."

The suffering began on the evening of 12 July last, when he appeared to have sent a doppelganger to the Stade de France to take part in the World Cup final. The real Ronaldo had been left behind in his hotel, or in the dressing room, or in the clinic to which he had been rushed for tests after his teammate Roberto Carlos had discovered him suffering from convulsions only hours before the kick-off.

We all need heroes, from 10-year-olds to the president of Fifa, and Ronaldo had been more or less unanimously nominated in advance as the super hero of France 98. His ability to perform in the final created a mystery that will probably remain unsolved until Mario Zagallo, the team's coach, decides to write his memoirs. And so a host of unproven allegations - of the effects of Xlocaine injections for his dodgy knees, of a bust-up with his girlfriend, of the intervention of the president of the Brazilian Football Association, and of the possible influence exerted by Nike's £80m investment in the team - will stain the memory of the game's greatest showpiece and will continue to cast a shadow over a man who has it within him to join the game's immortals.

Whatever it was that struck him that day, his physical recovery has been notably gradual. Before Sunday he had appeared in only six of Internazionale's 13 Serie A games, scoring four goals - two of them from the penalty spot. This from a man whose first four seasons in European football - two as a teenage prodigy with PSV Eindhoven, one as a £10m man with Barcelona, and the first of a scheduled six with Internazionale - had resulted in an aggregate of 113 league goals. In Milan, after agreeing a contract under which he earns more than £2m a year, his acquisition of a new nickname, *Il Fenomeno*, had been justified by an opening tally of 25 goals from 32 games against the world's stingy defences.

As the twinges caused by swollen tendons in his abused knees - first the left, then the right - refused to go away, his personal physiotherapist, Nilton Petroni, arrived from Rio de Janeiro to spend a month working on the problem. Ronaldo was missing from the traumatic 3-1 defeat at the hands of Fiorentina, the



Ronaldo is carried off clutching his right knee - 'the most scrutinised piece of anatomy in Italy' - having been caught by a mistimed tackle from Roma's Fabio Petrucci on Sunday

AP

league leaders, on 23 November, and there was a brief panic when he described the knee problem as "chronic" in a television interview, terminology which appeared to suggest that his career might be as good as over. But linguistic imprecision was blamed, and there were signs of at least a partial recovery in his Champions' League appearances against Real Madrid on 26 November in a 3-1 home win, and in the 2-0 away victory over Sturm Graz on 10 December - games which bracketed the sacking of Internazionale's coach, Gigi Simoni, and the engagement of Mircea Lucescu, formerly of Rapid Bucharest. More significantly, three minutes from the end of the new coach's first league match, away to Udinese on 13 December, Ronaldo scored the only goal of the game, relaunching the team's title hopes.

In the middle of last week he played for the Rest of the World against Italy in Rome's Olympic Stadium, in a match celebrating the centenary of the Italian FA. Afterwards he told the world what he wanted for Christmas: a transfer to Internazionale for Zinedine Zidane, his team-mate for the night and his successor as the winner of *France Football* magazine's coveted *Ballon d'Or* for the Europe-based player of the year. "I love the way he reads the game," Ronaldo said. "He plays the ball so beautifully, and he has lots of attacking ideas. Maybe he'd be too expensive, but I'd still buy him. I gave him my congratulations because he deserved to win the *Ballon d'Or*. But I warned him, too, that next year I'll be trying to win it back."

Ronaldo returned for club training in the passenger seat of a big black Jeep, issuing a series of smiling *Ciaos* to team-mates, journalists, friends and strangers alike as he strode through the foyer of La Pinetina, Internazionale's training centre, a half-hour's drive north of the city, close to Lake Como with the Alpine foothills in the distance. Ten minutes later he had swapped his navy cashmere overcoat for a club

tracksuit and was joining the rest of the star-studded squad - Roberto Baggio, Youri Djorkaeff, Ivan Zamorano, Javier Zanetti, Gianluca Pagliuca and so on - for lunch in the players' dining room.

Training was scheduled later than usual for two reasons: the next day's match would have an evening kick-off, and the previous day's activities had included a pre-Christmas visit to the circus for the players and their families, and a lavish party afterwards at the villa of their president, Massimo Moratti.

To join them for a practice match, full of shouting and laughter punctuated by Lucescu's hoarse commands as they rehearsed routines intended to break down Roma's four-man rearguard.

Taking part in the session was Aron Winter, the 31-year-old Dutch midfielder who moved to Internazionale via Ajax and Lazio. As the players emerged from the dressing rooms to relax before their evening meal, he spoke of his affection for the man he faced in the World Cup semi-final in Marseilles.

at Lazio, Winter is used to observing the phenomenon of mega-celebrity at close quarters. "Rony is a little bit like Van Basten, a little bit quiet. They're big stars and they're doing their work and they know what they want to reach in their careers. Paul Gascoigne was also a big star, but he was different. Everybody knows him, he likes to joke, to do crazy things. Rony is still young, and like all young people he likes to joke and make the other guys laugh. But when we're talking about quality, he has so much talent that it's incred-

got uptight about those things, because every day, every day, it doesn't matter which newspaper, which TV programme, which sponsor, a lot of people want something from him. Maybe sometimes he gets a little bit tired about those things. But he's very calm and he's got a good manager who protects him very well, so that he's going on a straight way."

Against the Netherlands in July, Ronaldo had been close to his best, constantly embarrassing Frank de Boer, Jaap Stam and Philip Cocu, and scoring a brilliant opening goal 16 seconds into the second half. Yet five days later he became invisible. "To this day," Winter said, "I don't know what happened. He played great against us, at a time when we were completely convinced that we were going to win the World Cup. So I was certainly surprised when I saw what happened to him in the final." Had they spoken about that when the Internazionale players reconvened at the start of the season? "No, he spoke with the doctor and the trainer. They're his private problems. I couldn't tell you exactly what happened."

HE RISES from the stretcher and tries his weight on the injured leg. Gesturing to Djorkaeff, he accepts the ball from a short free-kick and blasts it angrily over the Roma bar. Pulling his right stocking over the knee-cap, as if to coddle it, he walks thoughtfully back to the half-way line.

Until that moment Ronaldo has threatened to devastate the visitors' defence every time the ball is near him. But now he is moving with less alacrity, refusing to challenge his marker for high balls. Early in the second half he misses a fine chance to equalise Paulo Sergio's strike for Roma when he stabs a shot weakly wide after being put through by Baggio, who has been on the field less than a minute.

"The worst is over," Ronaldo had announced before the Roma match. "I'm feeling strong again. The goal in Udine gave me a lot of joy. It gave me back the confidence that I need so much, because I've been going

through a period of self-doubt as a result of the injury. Now I'm not afraid any more. I'm no longer worried that I might need surgery. Dr Volpi [the club doctor] told me that it wouldn't be an easy thing to treat, but that I wasn't to worry. He promised me that I wouldn't need an operation and he was right. I calmed down after he took me to a specialist in France who confirmed the diagnosis. As for next year, I'm just hoping to get back to 100 per cent, and then we'll see. After what I've been through I just want to play, and to win, and to score goals."

Baggio's arrival is the catalyst for an Internazionale spree of four goals in half an hour, their task eased by the expulsion of Petrucci, given a second yellow card for tripping the substitute with the scores level at 1-1. Three minutes later Zamorano puts the home side ahead, allowing Lucescu to remove Ronaldo from the action while the rest of the team finish the job of sending the supporters off for the two-week break in a good mood, their team having vaulted over Roma to take fourth place in the table, and looking forward to the European Cup meetings with Manchester United in March.

As Ronaldo leaves the pitch and walks straight out through the San Siro tunnel to the dressing room, his departure looks like a precaution. It turns out he has a plane to catch. By the time Lucescu emerges to give his thoughts on the victory, Ronaldo is on his way home to Rio for a week's intensive physiotherapy with Nilton Petroni.

"I see 1998 as a positive year, even though it's been a difficult one," he had said at La Pinetina. "I didn't win the Italian championship, the World Cup, or the *Ballon d'Or*. But I'm feeling better all the time. The knee trouble has almost completely gone and now it's reduced to just a little irritation. Nothing serious."

The year of learning how to suffer may be over. But for the world's most visible 22-year-old, the year of repaying faith, hope and investment is about to begin.



Ronaldo was more or less nominated in advance as the super hero of France 98. His inability to perform against France was a mystery that will probably remain unsolved until Mario Zagallo writes his memoirs

whose willingness to invest almost £50m in six years of one man's career had brought Ronaldo from Barcelona to Internazionale. Even so, the session out on the practice pitch began without Ronaldo, who made his way first to the gym, mischievously aiming trips at the retreating heels of an assistant coach as he went off for special physiotherapy, while the rest were warming up with a jog and a game of one-touch. The light was already starting to fade when he trotted out

"Rony is a great guy," Winter said. "He's very sweet and normal. What I appreciate is that he's very young and he's one of the biggest stars of the last 10 years, in fact the kind of player who only appears every 10 years, and although he gets a lot of pressure from that, he still works well with the other players. He's very available. If you need something, or if you need to talk, he's always there."

After playing with Marco van Basten at Ajax and Paul Gascoigne

ible. Of course the rest of us play for him. That's natural."

As a member of the supporting cast, Winter appreciates those who can handle the problems associated with having their names, as Hollywood would put it, above the title. "With every young player, when there's a lot of pressure and you're in the press all the time, it's very difficult to remain yourself. Rony is a big star, the biggest since Maradona and Van Basten, but he's always himself. I'd understand it if he sometimes

Ten command performances

Win which put Arsenal on course for the title

FOOTBALL

BY GLENN MOORE

AS THE Arsenal players celebrated with the adoring pocket of their supporters tucked into the corner of Old Trafford, you just knew. It could not have been more obvious if a ghostly hand, taking time out from picking National Lottery winners, had descended from the Manchester sky and pointed at the yellow-shirted band before sprinkling them with stardust. Here were the next Premiership champions.

Arsenal's 1-0 win over Manchester United in March was not as dramatic as their famous title-clinching victory at Anfield in 1989 but it was almost as conclusive. The pretenders had been to the home of the champions and won with more ease than the scoreline suggested. They were still only second in the table but, as you looked from the jubilant Arsenal players, their faces glowing with confidence, to the wounded figure of Peter Schmeichel limping from the arena, there was a sense of the passing of an era.

Arsenal, unbeaten in nine games, had arrived at Old Trafford nine points behind but with three matches - all away - in hand. United were still favourites but canny punters had already taken the precaution of accepting Manchester-based bookie Fred Done's premature offer to pay out on bets backing them for the title.

While the visitors were without David Seaman and Ian Wright, neither were missed. United's injury problems were more grave. Ryan Giggs' absence would prove to be as telling as the decision to play John Curtis at right-back.

Curtis, a promising and cultured England youth international, is still to recover from the chasing Marc Overmars gave him. Overmars was in prime form and Curtis was removed to left-wing, then the bench, by the hour. He has since been supplanted by Wes Brown.



Arsenal's Marc Overmars beats Manchester United's Peter Schmeichel to score the goal that opened up the Premiership race at Old Trafford

Dog-tired but dogged in Kuala Lumpur

ATHLETICS

BY MIKE ROWBOTTOM

IWAN THOMAS had every excuse not to earn the Commonwealth 400 metres title in Kuala Lumpur. In winning his personal battle with his domestic rival Mark Richardson at the previous month's European Championships, the 24-year-old Welshman had established himself as the British No 1.

As such, he was selected for the British team to contest the World Cup in Johannesburg on the eve of the Commonwealth athletics programme.

In South Africa, Thomas performed mightily, winning the individual event at full stretch from Jerome Young of the United States, and putting in maximum effort in the following day's relay despite having to chase a lost cause on the final leg.

Thomas was dog-tired. But, unlike Wales's other European champion, Colin Jackson, he decided to race for his country in an effort to complete an outstanding triple.

Thus he spent 10 hours on an overnight flight from Johannesburg, arriving at Kuala Lumpur in the early hours of Tuesday morning, a day before he had to race in two qualifying rounds.

Little wonder that he decided it was worth investing some of his \$50,000 prize money in upgrading his plane ticket.

In the meantime, Richardson, whose early-season win over Olympic champion Michael Johnson in Oslo had established a high

Even so, when he left the field United were still level, Overmars having missed two good chances. He had also had a decent penalty appeal, for a foul by Curtis, denied.

United had created nothing, only a wayward pass by Lee Dixon and a linesman's error giving Andy Cole a brace of chances which he squandered. Their attacks, lacking width, had foundered on the French axis of

Emmanuel Petit and Patrick Vieira. If anyone got past them they met Tony Adams and Martin Keown in "they shall not pass" mode. After that stood Alex Manninger, such an able deputy some doubted if Seaman would win his place back. This defensive excellence was the bedrock of Arsenal's championship campaign. The Dutch partnership of Overmars and Dennis Bergkamp,

with support from Ray Parlour, the cutting edge.

A dozen minutes from time, with United re-organising after injury, Arsenal's pressure told. Headers from Bergkamp and Nicolas Anelka released Overmars who sprinted through to score. United's agony was complete when Schmeichel, in a rash foray upfield, damaged a hamstring.

"We looked tired," said the Manchester United manager, Alex Ferguson.

"United are still in the best position," said Arsène Wenger of Arsenal. Only one of them was telling the truth.

It would be another five weeks before Arsenal assumed the leadership as United, closing with five wins and two draws, fought all the way. But

Arsenal's games in hand proved decisive. They won the next eight matches, sealing the title with a crushing 4-0 victory at home to Everton on 3 May.

Manchester United (4-4-2): Schmeichel; Curtis (Thornley, 52), G. Neville, Berg, Irwin; Beckham, Johnson (May, 78), Scholes, P. Neville (Solskjaer, 76); Shevchenko, Cole. Arsenal (4-4-2): Manninger, Dixon, Keown, Adams, Winburn; Parlour (Gardie, 68), Vieira, Petit, Overmars; Wreh (Anelka, 65), Bergkamp. Referee: A. White (Co. Durham). Attendance: 55,174.

Brilliance and Brawn combined provides a classic

A FORMULA ONE world championship that promised so little in its early stages blossomed into one of the more absorbing of recent seasons, with a duel between Mika Hakkinen and Michael Schumacher which went to the final Grand Prix.

Hakkinen's ultimate success was reward for McLaren Mercedes' superiority over the year - and also in no small measure to the Finn's resilience, notably in the penultimate round, at the Nürburgring, where he stunned Schumacher with an emphatic victory after starting behind the Ferrari No 1 and his team-mate, Eddie Irvine.

Mostly, however, Hakkinen's wins were routine, disciplined displays, supported when necessary by David Coulthard. Schumacher, as usual, had to work harder for his successes, cajoling inferior machinery, outwitting McLaren with clever tactics and punishing them for any error.

He demonstrated familiar - some would say unacceptable - aggression to win in Argentina and Canada, but

MOTOR RACING

BY DERICK ALLSOP

there were no dissenting voices, merely eulogies after his extraordinary triumph in Hungary.

It was the outstanding performance of the season, incorporating Schumacher's incomparable speed and car control, opportunism, ingenuity and team-work. Every member of the German's crew played a role, none more so than the Ferrari technical director, Ross Brawn.

Schumacher lined up third on the Budapest grid, behind Hakkinen and Coulthard, and the auguries were no better for the Italian camp when their man was held at bay in the first sector of the race. Worse still for Schumacher on a circuit which offers scant chance for overtaking, he emerged from his first pit-stop trailing Jacques Villeneuve.

The situation called for swift and



Michael Schumacher celebrates a stunning victory in Hungary

imaginative action. Brawn now opted for a three-stop plan. Its success would depend on the element of surprise, a slick team operation, and the brilliance of the world's best driver.

Part one of the mission was accomplished as Schumacher dove into the pits again, to be followed by Coulthard in McLaren's misguided attempt to cover. The Ferrari returned to the track not only clear of Coulthard but also in front of Hakkinen, whose car had a problem.

This was an unexpected bonus, but still the most demanding part of Schumacher's task lay ahead if he was to retain his lead after a third stop. Brawn spelled out the re-

quirement over the pit-to-car radio link: open up a 25-second gap in 19 laps. "Thank you very much," came Schumacher's sardonic response. Schumacher set about the challenge like a man possessed, hurtling the Ferrari to the very edge of adhesion, and once beyond it. He recovered and resumed his seemingly demented charge, undaunted by the bumpy and potentially catastrophic excursion.

It all made sense, however, when he pulled into the pits for his third stop and shot back out again, still leading a demoralised Coulthard comfortably. One of his finest victories was assured.

Cannon-fodder pull off miracle in Bordeaux

31 JANUARY, Bordeaux: Heineken Cup Final, Bath 19 Brive 18.

Call it fate, call it divine will, call it whatever you fancy: there were strange forces at work in the Stade Lescure on European Cup final day last January. Brive, the reigning champions, and overwhelming favourites, possessed all the guns and all the bullets: fierce tight forwards, a dynamic back row, international half-backs, a pair of Linford Christie on the wings and the best goal-kicker in Europe. More importantly still, they were on familiar soil. It would take something a good deal more potent than the most vulnerable Bath side in recent memory to deny the Frenchmen a return visit to the summit of club rugby's Farnsworth.

Or so we thought. Bath crossed the Channel with some distinctly shop-soiled personnel - Jon Callard was summoned from the back end of beyond to kick whatever goals might present themselves, while Jeremy Guscott was playing only his second serious game in seven months - but during a week of intensive soul-searching on the training pitch, they somehow cornered the market in the intangibles of big-time sport: belief, spirit, desire, a collective willingness to shed every last drop of sweat, every last drop of blood, in pursuit of their ultimate prize. And in the end, those uncoachable qualities carried the day.

It made for an unforgettable spectacle, enhanced by a surge of noise from 6,000 travelling Recreation Grounders as they slowly cottoned on to the fact that their team were contenders rather than cannon-fodder. From the depths of an unpropitious opening 40 minutes, during which Olivier Magne and Sebastian Carrat threatened breakaway tries and Christophe Lamaison looked capable of kicking penalties from anywhere inside his own half as well as the opposition's, Callard began to register a presence on the scoreboard. He would eventually claim all 19 Bath points, including the only try of the match and a late penalty that left the travelling supporters in need of a communal change of underwear.

In a sense, Brive handed Bath the trophy on a silver platter, Philippe

RUGBY UNION

BY CHRIS HEWETT

Carbonneau, that arch-pragmatist of a scrum-half, showed a hitherto unsuspected streak of tactical naivete in ignoring the brilliance of his own backs and attempting to batter his enemy into submission. Given that Bath had little going for them apart from the stomach for a fight, the French game plan was a nonsense. When, deep in injury time, Lamaison's nerve finally failed him - the centre miscued an awkward but



Andy Nicol, the Bath captain, holds aloft the Heineken Cup

perfectly kickable penalty from the left touchline - the folly of the champions' approach was laid bare for all to see. Except that few in the stadium were in much of a condition to see anything: there were too many tears - French tears of frustration and bewilderment, West Country tears of relief and unrestrained joy - for that. And as the piercing emotion of that sunlit winter's afternoon in France began to subside, the moral of the piece was obvious. International rugby may generate most of the money, but it will never be the whole of the game.



Iwan Thomas races down the straight to land the 400 metres gold medal in Kuala Lumpur

level of expectation, had turned down a relay spot in the World Cup to acclimatise himself for Kuala Lumpur.

Defeat in the European final had been, in his own words, his "lowest low" since he started running competitively. He had left Hungary hungry for revenge, and it seemed he would be likely to take advantage of his leg-weary rival.

Thomas, the early part of whose season had been jeopardised by a hamstring injury, looked understandably laboured in negotiating his heats. But as he prepared for the semi-final, he hit a bigger problem - his back seized up.

"I was in tears with the pain and I came close to knocking the Games on the head," said Thomas, who received emergency treatment until four o'clock in the morning on the day of the semi-final. On he went, even finding time to joke in the home straight with his team-mate Jamie Baulch.

As the gun went in the final, the two Britons found themselves the focus of attention, as they had been in Budapest. Arriving in the home straight, Thomas appeared to have a slight lead and a final surge from Richardson seemed inevitable. It came - but Thomas hung on to cross the line eight-tenths of a second ahead of his grimacing rival in 44.52sec. Thomas had claimed his third major title in the space of a month.

"When I came off that last bend my legs felt dead, but everyone else's must have been worse," he said, before paying tribute to the efforts of his coach, Mike Smith, the man who guided the early career of the man whom Thomas succeeded as the British record-holder, Roger Black.

"All winter he makes me run over the sand dunes at Merthyr Mawr and I curse him. He just tells me to sod off."

Slogger who battled to summit

JUVENILE EARS may have been clipped after some racing aficionados got round to viewing the video of the Grand National of 1998.

This was the race that was run in porridge ground made treacherous by the persistent downpour, a race when only six of the 37 runners finished, a race in which three of the combatants fought their last battle. When you watch a replay of this murderous contest it is easy to imagine that someone has been meddling with the recording equipment. The race appears to be run almost entirely in slow motion. The winner takes almost 11 minutes to get round, in a time over two minutes slower than Mr Frisk's course record.

The little horse which towed the bulk home like a tug that day goes by the name of Earth Summit. He is perhaps the slowest good horse there has ever been.

On the Gloucestershire gallops of his trainer, Nigel Twiston-Davies, Earth Summit occasionally has to be

RACING

BY RICHARD EDMONDSON

pulled off the main track to let other horses by. When a member of the string requires confidence-boosting by slaughtering a workmate they put him side by side with this established plodder.

If, however, they had made the Titanic out of the same material as Earth Summit's body there would have been a lot of little ice cubes floating in the north Atlantic. This equine creature's relish for toughness is unprecedented.

He has fought all his life as Earth Summit. As a young horse his hooves used to curl forward like Aladdin's slippers, but he has overcome that physical infirmity. Aintree continued his National collection as he already has the Scottish and Welsh versions in his scrapbook.

In addition, Earth Summit appears to have survived a racing Armageddon quite sweetly. He has won over the Liverpool Himalayas this season and a recent second place at Haydock to Sunnyside, Britain's top-rated chaser, may have been the best performance of his life.

Earth Summit will soon be 11 and entering the vintage category, but no sign of deterioration to bodywork or engine have emerged. His personal sustenance follows the extension of the National Hunt dream - that you can buy a horse cheaply which wins the sport's most high-profile race. The gelding's six owners paid \$5,800 for their noble beast and have subsequently enjoyed 10 victories from 36 starts and over £370,000 in prize money.

The Summit Partnership will not remember their horse for how he has enriched them. They will select, instead, the day in April when he won perhaps the most arduous race ever seen on a British racecourse.



Earth Summit's finest moment as he lands the Grand National

that ignited the sporting year

A great unsporting occasion at Nottingham

CRICKET

BY DEREK PRINGLE

IT IS perhaps indicative of the confusing times we live in that the greatest cricketing moment of the year, that "jewel of duels" between Allan Donald and Michael Atherton at Trent Bridge, owed its genesis and subsequent intensity to an unsporting one - namely that of a batsman failing to walk.

Of all sports, cricket has long carried the heaviest behavioural baggage. For once, though, the drama outweighed the morality play, as Donald, arguably the world's fastest bowler, tried to dislodge Atherton, one of the game's great unflappables.

England's cricketers have not had much to crow about recently, but the series win over South Africa at the end of last summer has been one of them. On the verge of conceding an insurmountable deficit at Old Trafford, they clung onto a draw before winning the final two Tests and the series.

The first of those victories, Trent Bridge was a ding-dong affair that neither side could be said to have won or lost until lunch on the final day. Atherton's offering, a defiant unbeaten 98, was a priceless knock, though one sullied by old-school etiquette by his refusal to walk on 28, when a short ball from Donald after tea on the fourth day took his glove on its way to the wicketkeeper. But if television confirmed the contact, Steve Dunne, the umpire did not, and Atherton, despite the South African's appeals, was given not out.

But there in a way lies the rub. Without the controversy, the spectating public would have been denied the most thrilling 40 minutes of the sporting year as Donald, incensed by the injustice, literally tried to remove Atherton, by any means necessary.

Perhaps an "element of need" always required for sport to forget itself and spill over into the visceral tussles of real life. That is certainly what appeared to happen to Donald, who, close to being spent following his exertions earlier in the day, somehow managed to summon another burst of energy and so escalate the fray.

Although clearly furious - he had already barked something in Afrikaans at Atherton - he did not let his fury get the better of him. In- stead he somehow focused it on the undermanned man taking strike 22 yards away, peppering him



England's Mike Atherton and Allan Donald of South Africa, caught in a rare moment of non-hostility at Trent Bridge

repeatedly with short balls from around the wicket, an angle that, for right-handers at least, increases the level of intimidation. It was the fast-bowling equivalent of sticking pins into a voodoo doll, except that

Atherton was marginally more mobile and therefore able to influence his destiny. In such situations, terms such as technique and temperament are irrelevant. The battle was being

fought on molecular level and it was really a question of whose adrenalin would give out first. As it happened a hook shot for three broke the spell and Donald took his sweater. At the time, it seemed that there

were no winners and losers just two survivors. Ten days later at Headingley, when England won the series, the true toll of that ferocious 40 minutes came to light. And it cost South Africa dear.

When the Eagles did the unthinkable at Wembley

SHEFFIELD EAGLES were the longest-priced outsiders in the Silk Challenge Cup final for years, so to beat Wigan - and do so with something to spare - ranks as one of the year's most memorable sporting achievements.

Not even their home city seemed particularly enthused by the prospect of the Eagles at Wembley, judging by the empty rows at their end of the ground. But John Kear and his players believed that not only could they win it, but that they definitely would; and that is the way they played from the start, with their prop forwards, Paul Broadbent and Dale Laughton, tearing into Wigan like it was the only match of their lives.

That, perhaps, sums up the difference between the two sides on the

RUGBY LEAGUE

BY DAVE HADFIELD

afternoon. Wigan, despite an unaccustomed two year absence from the big day, were relaxed to the point of treating the occasion as routine. Sheffield were ferociously keyed-up, but also managed to be the more cohesive and organised side.

Mark Aston, their long-serving scrum-half, won the Lance Todd Trophy for the way he outmanoeuvred Wigan and particularly the way his kicking game put Andy Farrell in the shade. It might equally well have gone to Dave Watson, an unreliable maverick of a player with a chequered

career in three countries. Kear took a calculated risk by bringing him on board and he was a vital contributor at Wembley, both with his last-ditch tackling and his ability to run the ball at the opposition.

Neutrals have rarely been as happy at Wembley as they were when Sheffield ran out 17-4 winners. It was impossible not to warm to a good bunch of blokes and a genuinely worthy club as they staggered onto their bus with cardboard boxes full of champagne. But what of the medium-term consequences of such a remarkable afternoon?

Well, hopes that their achievement would win over the doubting and indifferent masses of the Sheffield public have not yet been fulfilled. More predictably, when the two



Sheffield's Keith Senior powers past Gary Conolly of Wigan during the Eagles' Challenge Cup victory

teams met again in Super League the following weekend, Wigan crushed them 36-6. Not entirely surprising, either, to those who have seen comparable circumstances applied before, was that victory led almost seamlessly into disintegration. Of Sheffield's Wembley squad, at least six will not be with the club when next season begins.

Blood-and-guts display earned showman new respect



His face a mask of blood and pain, Chris Eubank stands tall

MAYBE THERE was no other way for Chris Eubank to confirm a true fighting heart than engage in a contest so brutal that even hardened ringsiders called for him to be spared further punishment.

What else could you think when you saw shock on the faces of people who had never realised how much a boxer gives of himself?

The occasion was Eubank's unsuccessful attempt to wrest the World Boxing Organisation cruiserweight title from Carl Thompson last April in Manchester.

Until then, despite proving in hard contests against Nigel Benn, Michael Watson and Steve Collins that his heart pumped nothing but high-octane courage, Eubank's reputation had been formed by ludicrous, if profitable, showmanship. What the challenge to Thompson made clear was that in choosing to

BOXING

BY KEN JONES

shape his career at middle and super-middleweight around a series of contrived defences, contests that did not require him to train diligently. Eubank had sold himself short when he could have been the British fighter of the 90s.

Giving away more than half a stone, Eubank showed a warrior's mettle, fighting with such spirit that a left hook in the second round brought the prospect of a remarkable victory until he chose to stand off the visibly-stunned champion.

Eubank, who also dropped Thompson in the fourth, paid dearly for this perverse decision, finishing the contest with one eye

completely closed in a mass of brutalised facial tissue and spitting blood. He had never been in such pain or looked more ring-soiled.

Drawn to boxing by the glitz of television presentation, conditioned by Naseem Hamed's comparatively bloodless dismantling of carefully selected opponents, women in the audience averted their gaze from Eubank's mangled features.

Admitting that he had thought more than once of stopping the contest, the referee Roy Francis said, "It was a dilemma. Chris took so much punishment that I was only a second away from stepping between them, but I had to give him every chance because he kept coming back with punches. It makes me feel like weeping; he's a guy I like so much."

The former heavyweight champion, George Foreman, who was

working for American television on Hamed's defence of the WBO featherweight title, thought Eubank's performance heroic. "Did you ever see such guts?" "People told me that Eubank has made a mockery of boxing, but he fought tonight as though his life was on the line."

Others would speak about the lifeless glaze that came over Thompson's face when Eubank put him down in the fourth round; about the heavy blows Thompson fired in return to secure his title, the immense will shown by both men.

Eubank is a creature of ego. Were he anything else, he wouldn't have stood up to punches that caused him to spend a night under observation in hospital after undergoing a brain scan. If it was any consolation he at last had the respect of his peers. In bloody defeat he was more endearing.

Rusedski shows off his resilience in Paris match

TENNIS

BY JOHN ROBERTS

THE CENTRE court at the All England Club is adorned with ampelopsis creeper, whereas the sloping outer walls of the Palais Omnisports in the Bercy district of Paris are decorated with strips of turf, creating the impression of a Wimbledon bunker.

It was there in November that Greg Rusedski shed the frustration that had gnawed at him since a painful episode in June by outplaying Pete Sampras, who was en route to finishing the season as the world No 1 for a record sixth consecutive year.

Rusedski's triumph in straight sets against Sampras in the final of the \$2.55m (£1.55m) Paris Open made him the first British player to win one of the ATP Tour's Super 9 events, which are ranked second only to the four Grand Slams. The only other Briton to have beaten Sampras was Jeremy Bates, when the American was a callow 17-year-old in his first season on the professional circuit, showing only a glimmer of his potential to win 11 Grand Slam singles titles.

Five months earlier, when Sampras was in the process of winning his fifth Wimbledon singles title, Rusedski had been unable to complete a first-round match against Australia's Mark Draper because of an ankle injury suffered while competing at the Queen's Club in London a fortnight before. On leaving Wimbledon, Rusedski did not play again for two months.

Prior to the indoor contest in Paris, Sampras had won his six previous matches against Rusedski. The first was at Wimbledon in 1995, shortly after the Canadian-born Rusedski pledged himself to the British cause, bringing with him lots of ambition, a big heart, a mighty left-handed serve and groundstrokes that tended to be as wide as his smile.

By the time he met Sampras for the seventh time, Rusedski was able to play the most impressive tennis of his career to win 6-4, 7-6, 6-3, after an hour and 44 minutes. He complemented the power of his serve-volley game with confident returns and blistering groundstrokes, particularly on the backhand, and showed admirable resilience when the going became bumpy in the second set.

Rusedski, having saved four break points in the second game of the second set, was unable to deny Sampras in the sixth game, netting a volley after the American returned a second serve. But Sampras,

the defending champion, proved fallible when serving for the set at 5-4, twice double-faulting, crucially on break point. Rusedski won the tie-break, 7-4, and took a 3-0 lead in the third set before Sampras won another game.

The measure of Rusedski's victory, aside from a cheque for \$393,000, was calculated by his opponent. "He's been hot all week and has pretty much kicked everybody's



Rusedski: Defeated Sampras in the final of the Paris Open

butt," Sampras said. "This match was pivotal. It really would have put me ahead by quite a bit."

At the time, Sampras needed every ranking point that he could lay a racket on to prevent the Chilean Marcelo Rios from ruining his chances of moving ahead of Jimmy Connors, with whom he shared the record of finishing as the world No 1 for five years in a row. In the event, Sampras would have to wait only a few more weeks before the record was his.

Rusedski, however, was left dreaming of a time when he may still become the world No 1. "If I play like I did today,"

Rose found game so easy among Birkdale dunes

GOLF

BY ANDY FARRELL

IT WAS a time to dream. Christmas for Justin Rose came nearer the longest day of the year than the shortest. At tea-time on a wild and windy Saturday afternoon a 17-year-old amateur led the 127th Open Championship. Rose walked off the 12th green with a par to lead by one from Brian Watts.

Not since Harold Hilton at Hoylake in 1897 had a British amateur won the silver claret jug. There may have been 24 holes to play, but that did not stop Rose thinking ahead. Victory would be difficult to top, or would it? "I guess when I'm 18 you've got to win the Masters, at 19 win the US Open and at 20 win the USPGA," Rose joked. Rose smiled a lot during those few magical days on the dunes of the Lancashire coast, clearly oblivious to what was going on around him.

Royal Birkdale was testing the greatest players in the world and finding most of them wanting. But Rose's 68 on the Friday, in the second round, was the best score of the day, the next best coming from the eventual champion, Mark O'Meara, with a 68. The round equalled the lowest by an amateur in the Open, set by Frank Stranahan and Tiger Woods.

The following day Woods could do no better than a 77 and Nick Price had an 82. Rose, who started the day tied for second alongside the world No 1 and the former Open champion, scored a 75 to lie fifth, three behind Watts.

All along he smiled and waved to



Justin Rose put big names in the shade at Royal Birkdale

a gallery who were in no doubt they had a new hero. "Starting out I didn't realise it would be anything like that," Rose said. "On every hole I got an ovation. It was incredible, people shouting my name. It pushed me on. I saw myself as Jack Nicklaus coming up the 18th."

Rose was never quite in contention on the final day and seemed to be making a mess of the last until his last shot as an amateur, a chip from 45 yards over a couple of bunkers, found the hole. Never has respectful silence from the massed ranks around the 18th green turned to a tumultuous ovation quicker. He deserved it, finishing tied fourth, the best result by an amateur in the Open for 45 years.

It was a brilliant finale to the best week of a young man's life, the unveiling of a bright, new talent. From the perspective of an aspiring professional trying to make his way - so far having missed 10 cuts out of 10 and failed to gain his player's card on the European tour - it is a glorious memory. May it not become a milestone.

SPORT

TEN PERFORMANCES THAT SET THE SPORTING YEAR ON FIRE P18-19

Elton John accuses Hoddle

FOOTBALL

BY GLENN MOORE

SIR ELTON JOHN yesterday launched an astonishing attack on Glenn Hoddle, accusing him of "resenting" David Beckham's fame, ability and relationship with Victoria Adams, Beckham's pop-singer girlfriend.

The Watford chairman also revealed he had been in touch with Paul Gascoigne and was helping the Middlesbrough midfielder in his fight against alcoholism, an addiction the millionaire rock star has suffered from himself.

The 52-year-old made his remarks in a rare interview to mark his return to active service at Watford, after two hectic years personally and professionally had limited his involvement. Speaking at the First Division's club's Vicarage Road ground, he also said he felt the Premiership had "spiralled out of control" with "mediocre players being transferred for £2.5m".

Many would agree with that, but his remarks about Beckham are sure to cause controversy. "I felt for Beck at the World Cup," he said. "He was very shabbily treated by the England manager. I think it is resentment on Glenn Hoddle's part. Maybe he wasn't as successful as David, he had a great career but he didn't have a great England career. I think he resents that and he resents that he has a nice girlfriend and is famous." On a more conciliatory note he added: "I think a couple of the things Glenn Hoddle said are right. David does have to learn discipline on the pitch."

Beckham and Adams, who is better known as "Posh Spice", stayed at Sir Elton's house in the south of France after the World Cup and, he added, "love each other very much. I keep a close eye on David. I think he is one of the most talented players England has produced. I think he will eventually go abroad and cope with it. He has seen what his girlfriend has had to cope with and she does so very well. The Spice Girls work their balls off - if you'll pardon the expression."

"I do like to help anyone with special talent and if there is any way I can help them cope with the pressures I try and ring up and offer."

Thus the call to Gascoigne. "I spoke to Paul [Gascoigne] on the phone a couple of weeks ago at Middlesbrough to see if he wanted any help and to say if he did I would be there for him. It is a very hard thing to do to give



Sir Elton John (right) and Graham Taylor at Vicarage Road yesterday. Sir Elton said Glenn Hoddle treated Beckham 'very shabbily' at the World Cup

Peter Jay

up that addictive lifestyle. You need friends, people with a bit of experience, to help you."

"I wrote him a letter when he was in treatment saying: 'We are the same kind of person, self-destructive in lots of ways. I wasted a lot of my time doing blah blah blah. You are a genius, you have such skill, this is a great opportunity to prove to everybody, including the England manager, that you are a great footballer.'"

"I said: 'You are going to have to knuckle down and do some hard work and do as you are told. I can promise if you do the results will come.' I am very proud of Paul for what he is doing at the moment - just as I am proud of Tony Adams and Paul Merson."

Sir Elton also said he felt Hoddle "shot himself in the foot" during the World Cup "with all that nonsense about

Michael Owen. International football is dire and boring," he added. "I don't see any point in it. Everyone is so negative. I thought England played well in the World Cup, they were one of the most inventive teams, but I thought the overall competi-

tion was appalling and France the most boring team ever to win it."

Sir Elton added: "Hoddle would not be my choice as England manager but there is no one else. Only Terry Venables seems to revel in it. I

wouldn't want it, it is a thankless task being England manager and working for that lot [the FA]. I remember when I first became chairman [in the late-70s] and went to Football League meetings I thought: 'I must have so much to learn'."

Then I got there and thought: 'My God, these people are running football!'

He did not feel it had got any better. "The Premier League has spiralled out of control. We see very mediocre players going for £2.5m. I see figures banded around like £18m for Alan Shearer, a player who still hasn't found his form after coming back from injury. It's a joke. I'm not having a go at Shearer but if people want to pay that they have more money than sense. And when you see some players on the pitch you think: 'For Chrissakes, you are earning so much money and you are strolling around'. They can't pass a ball, can't tackle and get sent off on a regular basis. It's money for old rope."

Sir Elton also said he was "very uncomfortable with television's hold on the game" and

regarded the Manchester United-Sky TV deal as "extremely unhealthy". He said: "It's all very well for the fat cats on the board who are going to line their pockets, but why would United supporters want Rupert Murdoch to run 'their team'?"

It was a bravura performance of the sort that, often leads to a disrepute charge. Sir Elton had a word about that as well.

"This 'bringing the game into disrepute' for saying things - I always laugh about that. People should be free to say what they like. And how much were they going to give to the Welsh FA? I thought the intention of setting up the Premier League was to create the finest league in Europe but you see from the results in Europe it isn't. I don't even think it is in the top three."

Premier League ready to fight OFT

BY NICK HARRIS

UP TO 10 of the country's leading clubs, including Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool, could break away and form a domestic super league if the Premier League loses its court case with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) that starts in January, a League spokesman said yesterday.

The OFT is bringing legal action against the Premier League, BSkyB and the BBC to bring an end to the collective bargaining for television deals by top-flight clubs. If the OFT wins its case - which will cost the Premier League £7.5m of an estimated £30m total cost to all parties - individual clubs will be able to negotiate their own deals with whichever broad-casters offer the most money. The clubs currently do deals and split revenues collectively.

Mike Lee, a League spokesman, said if clubs were forced to make separate television deals it could "fatally undermine" the competitive nature of the Premiership by creating an unbridgeable gap between rich and poor. Fixture chaos, the establishment of mini-cartels among clubs led by television companies and a lack of investment in the rest of the game could also follow, he said.

The OFT insists it is acting to defend the rights of consumers, arguing that the Premier League artificially inflates the cost of football and restricts fans' access to watching live games on television.

Lee said his greatest fear is that the country's richest clubs would set up their own television stations, offer home games to viewers on pay-per-view and forever end the principle at the heart of the English league system - that smaller clubs can aspire to the top of the game.

Of the prospect of a break-away group going it alone if the case went against them, the League admitted: "We can't rule it out."

Some of the country's biggest clubs are in a no-lose situation, guaranteed healthy television incomes if the League wins and even healthier incomes if the OFT wins. Lee said, however, that all 20 clubs support the League's position.

An OFT spokeswoman played down fears of football being thrown into crisis should the League lose the case. "Dire warnings about the consequences of breaking up a cartel are not new," she said.

Taylor's brush with death

GRAHAM TAYLOR revealed yesterday that he had come within a couple of hours of dying due to the throat abscess which required an emergency operation last month, writes Glenn Moore.

The Watford manager said he had been suffering from a sore throat for some time prior to his health suddenly worsening to the extent that, on Tuesday 10 November, he was coughing blood. His wife, Rita, rang his doctor who, fearing a

heart attack, immediately summoned an ambulance.

It soon became apparent that the problem was an abscess in his throat which, combined with the effects of a chest infection, had swollen to the extent that it was blocking his windpipe. "It was a bit scary," Taylor said yesterday. "The doctor said I had two hours left and if my wife hadn't called they would not have got to me in time."

Nor did it end there. A week after being released the

53-year-old former England manager picked up a sinus infection, necessitating another 36 hours in hospital.

Having delegated management duties to Kenny Jackett and Luther Blissett, Taylor is slowly returning to work at the First Division club. He is also having speech therapy to correct a breathing problem which led to the development of the abscess. "It does put things in perspective," Taylor said. "None of us are indestructible."

Bosman receives £312,000

JEAN-MARC BOSMAN, the Belgian footballer whose landmark court action transformed the transfer system in Europe, finally reached a settlement yesterday in his own case. The Belgian football federation agreed to pay Bosman £312,000, ending years of litigation between the two parties.

Bosman (pictured right) went to the courts after his club, FC Liege, refused to allow him to move at the end of his contract to Dunkirk in France without a transfer fee, leaving the player without a club. Although Bosman won his case at the European Court of Appeal in December 1995, by



then it was too late to revive his career. He has spent the intervening three years caught up in appeals to Belgium's courts.

Despite his own problems, Bosman's case has benefited players across Europe. Players reaching the end of their contracts can now move freely between clubs within the European Union without any transfer fees being paid, while restrictions on the number of EU players have also been lifted.

Dalglish group undeterred

THE CONSORTIUM seeking control of Celtic has withdrawn its takeover bid, while making it clear that it has not given up the fight.

The group, led by the former Celtic player Kenny Dalglish, the Simple Minds singer Jim Kerr and the businessman Jim McAvoy, said that without being granted a meeting by the club's managing director Fergus McCann, who holds a 50.3 per cent majority, they are powerless.

Graeme Jack, speaking for the consortium, said: "It's a difficulty for us to prepare revised proposals in line with the majority shareholder if we are being denied discussions with him."

Fifa yesterday played down fears that Britain are set to lose their automatic vice-president's position on the executive committee of world football's governing body in the wake of the

cash-for-votes scandal.

A Fifa spokesman said: "Experience shows that it's not that easy to change the statutes. The agenda at the Fifa Congress [which takes place next July] is always fairly limited. You need 102 votes to get a motion through."

Paul Alcock says he could take legal action against Paolo Di Canio for the push that earned the Italian an 11-match ban. The referee has been undergoing physiotherapy to combat the injuries he sustained.

"Since the incident I have had continuous pins and needles down my left leg," Alcock said. "I was unable to sleep without painkillers and it has been hard for me and my family."

Liverpool are being linked with a move for the Milan goalkeeper, Jens Lehmann. The Anfield manager Gerard Houllier is keen to recruit a new No 1 and

Milan officials claim he has made an inquiry for the out-of-favour German. Milan are looking for around £3m.

Southampton have pulled out of a double bid for the South American strikers Waldir Perez and Adolfo Valencia. The Saints' manager, David Jones, has cancelled the £2.2m deal for Perez as the Peruvian, who plays for Alianza Lima, while Valencia, a Colombian, has been sent back after one training session.

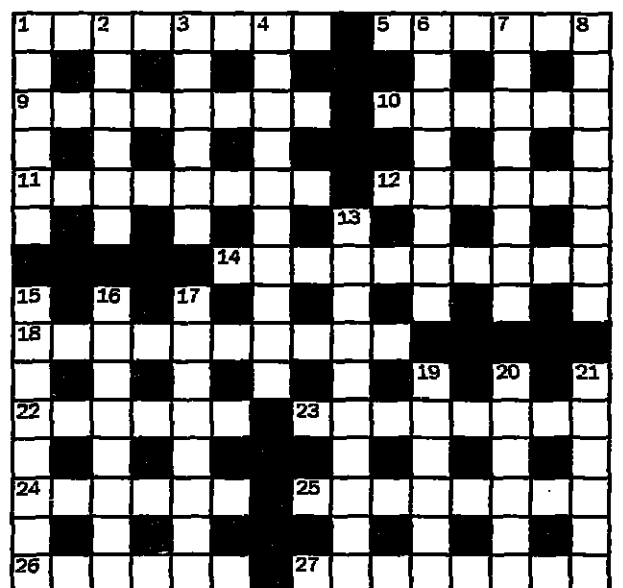
Peter Johnson is negotiating to sell his interest in Tranmere while waiting for a bid for a tranche of his Everton shares. Johnson, who quit as Everton's chairman last month, has until 31 December to dispose of his stakes in either club. Everton's vice-chairman, Bill Kenwright, is believed to have enough backers to buy 29.9 per cent of Johnson's 68 per cent Everton holding.

THE WEDNESDAY CROSSWORD

No.3801 Wednesday 23 December

by Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



- ACROSS**
- Fixed angle of skate, possibly (8)
 - One does not touch the waist in this dance (6)
 - Kind clever to swallow isinglass? (8)
 - Change into suit (6)
 - Tour of places of local interest (3-5)
 - Importance of accent (6)
 - Importunes wantonly, carrying on (10)
 - Entertainers bug daughter's replies, we hear (3-7)
 - High-ranking sailor in hold (6)
 - Gay inept sort who yet became a mummy? (8)
 - Doctor uses recipe for a light dessert (6)
 - They keep track of
- DOWN**
- Little fellow with paper round is frozen (6)
 - Having a bow in this positioning of arms? (6)
 - Natural aptitudes in noisy hide-outs (6)
 - One, with Canadian banks, setting up law centres (2,8)
 - Surpasses, with public work soon to start (8)
 - Private ice-store melting? (8)
 - Is worker, getting hon-our first, bending the

- lizards (8)
- O'Neill adaptation of some black art-form (6)
- Two donkeys passing the post? One should make a killing (8)
- Some adopt images that are the very best (6)
- Climbing-aids advanced in mines (6)
- Body of students keeping Sunday, by agreement (6)
- USA route? Go in a de-tour, over the top (10)
- Might one fall for a film-director? (8)
- Papal trip call for cheers? (8)
- Musical stir in California (8)
- Some adopt images that are the very best (6)
- Climbing-aids advanced in mines (6)
- Body of students keeping Sunday, by agreement (6)

Gooch and Graveney blast 'abject' England performance

CRICKET

BY DAVID CLOUGH

DAVID GRAVENEY, the chairman of the England selectors, said his team's performance in losing to an Australian XI in Hobart yesterday was "unacceptable". Graveney was speaking after England had lost by nine wickets as their opponents scored 376 for the loss of only one wicket on the final day. Greg Blewett, who cannot get into the Australia Test team, scored 213 not out, following his unbeaten 169 in the first innings.

In Hobart, Graham Gooch, the tour manager, spoke of

good wicket in a match dominated by batsmen. "Graveney said, 'But the way it has gone is unacceptable. It appears to me it was a case of them giving up. Some of the batsmen have had some time at the wicket, although the quality of the bowling they were facing was questionable. Our bowlers, though, have had a very bad ex-

perience and did not do enough to help themselves."

Pitches back home, meanwhile, remain a concern for both David Lloyd, the England coach, and Graveney, who believe the new structure of English cricket will bear the dividends it deserves only if county clubs make a commitment to provide fast, true

pitches that wear for spinners in four days, thereby resembling more closely the surfaces on which most Test matches are played.

"There is a limit to the number of times you can say atmospheric conditions have been the reason for curtailed games," Graveney said of last summer. "We had above-average rainfall. But the wickets have been too damp, have favoured seam too much and have strangled slow bowling."

Derek Pringle, page 16

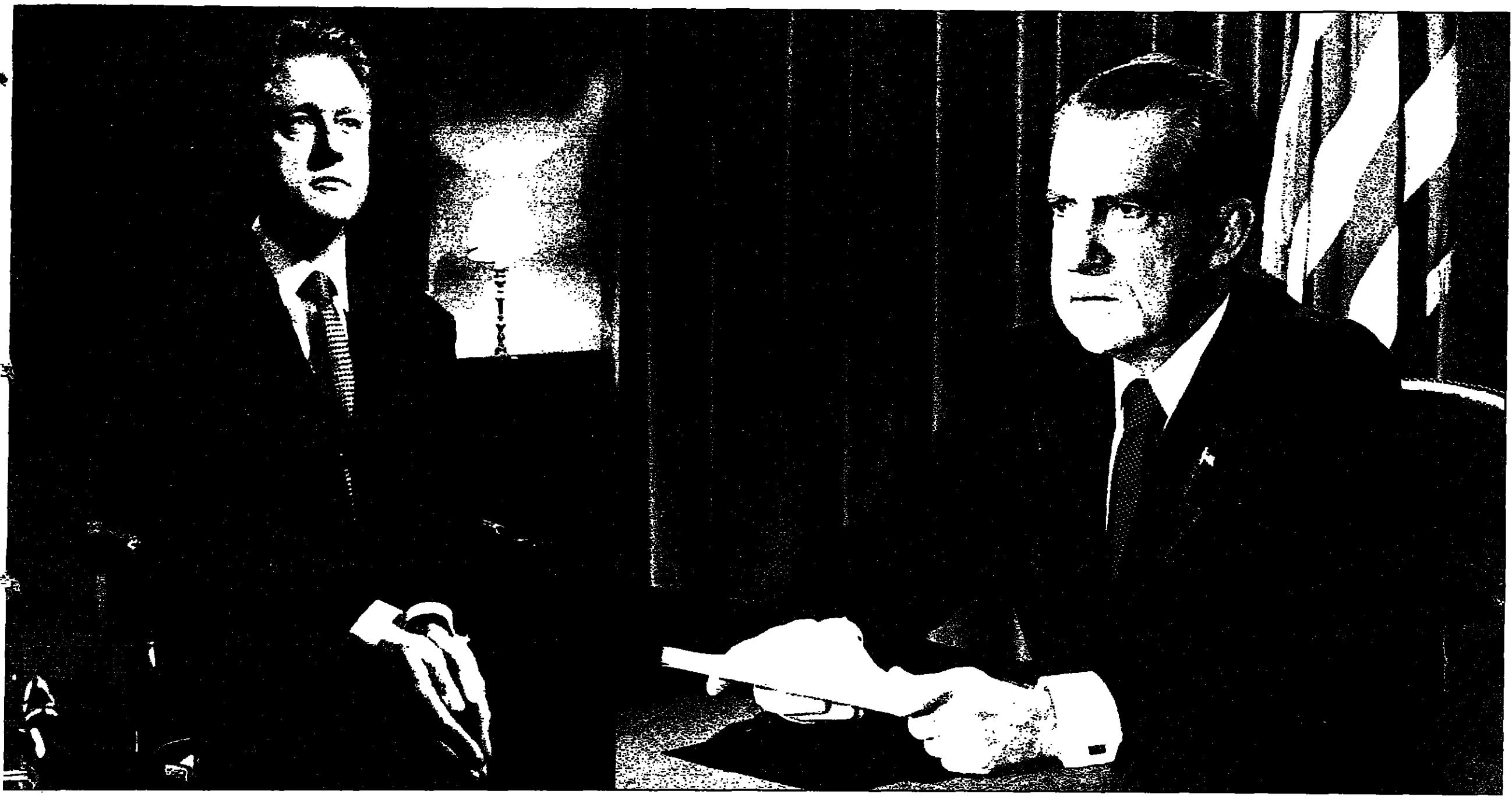
WEDNESDAY REVIEW

COMMENT • FEATURES • ARTS • LISTINGS • TELEVISION



Ben Bradlee was editor of *The Washington Post* in the 1970s when it broke the Watergate scandal. But, for him, last week's events – resignations, a small war and Clinton's impeachment – surpassed even the turmoil of Nixon's final days

All the Presidents' lies



AND SO IT HAS COME TO THIS...Because a flirtatious 22-year-old intern decided not to have the stains from a sexual encounter with the President removed from her dress, William Jefferson Clinton is impeached.

...Because America's leading pornographer threatened to out the next Speaker of the House as a multiple philanderer, Robert Livingston throws in the towel, announces he's through with politics, and heads back to civilian life.

...Because the same pornographer lets it be known to a favoured few that he has the goods on other Congressmen, including at least one who has expressed an interest in running for president, other top politicians will soon bite the dust.

...Because the secret files of the Starr investigation, not included in the Independent Counsel's public report, but available to members of the House Judiciary Committee, contain more smarmy details about the President's private life, no one can say for sure how this mess will end, much less when. After perhaps the most extraordinary week in American political history – impeachment, resignations and a small war – the experts still recite their mantra: "This isn't about sex."

Well, you could have fooled me.

ANYONE WHO CLAIMS to predict tomorrow's headlines is crazy. During the impeachment hearings, Democrats were almost as critical of President Clinton as were Republicans. In an effort to persuade colleagues that censure was a viable alternative to removal from office, one Democrat after another

rose to document presidential sins: philandering, perjury, and obstruction of justice. Then, after Clinton was actually impeached, they piled into buses and drove down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House. In front of the television cameras they jostled each other for the chance to show their support for the man they had just branded a philanderer, a perjurer and an obstructer of justice.

All this, mind you, when the latest *Washington Post-ABC News* poll (taken on Saturday and Sunday) shows that more than two out of every three Americans feel the President should not be removed from office, and 79 per cent of them think that too much attention is being paid to the extramarital affairs of elected officials.

This morning, in Washington, almost no one believes that the Senate will really convict the President and remove him from office. Instead there is increasing talk of censuring the President, after his trial has begun but before a verdict has been rendered. (As if impeachment itself somehow is not sufficient censure.)

Opponents of censure point out that a new Congress, with a Democratic majority, can simply repeal any vote of censure taken now. They go on to worry about setting a bad precedent. Could Franklin D Roosevelt have been censured for breaking his promise not to lead America into war? Could Harry Truman, with a popularity rating less than half of Clinton's, have been impeached for firing General Douglas MacArthur?

Since I left the editor's chair at *The Washington Post*, I have become much more patient. We will

know the answers to all questions sooner rather than later. What interests me now is how we got into this mess in the first place. Would President Bob Dole find himself in anything like this predicament? No way, surely. Didn't popular wisdom have it that good people were no longer seeking public office because of the salacious curiosity of the press? Starr and his investigators have surely taken care of that one.

One of the reasons we are in such a mess, I believe, is that society has become increasingly, and almost casually, accepting of lying during the last couple of generations. The cost of lying has decreased. The punishment no longer fits the crime, if it ever did. As we have heard endlessly in the last few months, perjury convictions have become hard to secure. (It depends on what the meaning of "is" is.) The risk of getting nailed for a lie seems to have diminished. The highest public figures, the most respected figures in private industry, routinely lie. It is more genteel to say that they routinely tell less than the truth. That avoids the unpleasant facts and it makes everyone feel better.

In Washington, spin doctors have been elevated to professional status, and spinning has become an art form. But the difference between spinning and lying is in the eyes of the beholder. Whenever the acceptability of lying increased to a point where it became a fundamental change in American ethics, certainly this change was a fact of life by the time of the Vietnam war.

Successive administrations, beginning with LBJ's, grievously damaged the virtue of truth in trying to justify the American presence there.

A few months after he became president, Johnson sent his Defense Secretary to Vietnam for a report on what was really going on. McNamara spoke to the generals and the GIs, to Americans and South Vietnamese, civilian and military. In two press conferences between Saigon and Washington, he told the world that he was much encouraged. There finally was reason for optimism.

But McNamara told President Johnson something quite different. Exactly the opposite, in fact. The war in South Vietnam was going to hell in a handbasket. General Westmoreland was going to ask for 200,000 more American troops, and McNamara was going to support his request. We didn't learn this vital truth until the Pentagon papers were published 17 years later, and only then because two American newspapers fought all the way to the Supreme Court for their release.

Did that lie change history? At that moment only 6,000 Americans had lost their lives in Vietnam. Before the truce seven years later, more than 50,000 Americans had lost their lives, plus countless hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese. The Nixon lies during Watergate produced the greatest crisis in the history of American government, until now. More than 30 of Nixon's closest associates were convicted and jailed, including the country's chief law enforcement officer, Attorney-General John Mitchell.

The lies about the Iran-Contra and arms-for-hostages affairs scarred the Reagan and Bush presidencies. But only Nixon paid any real price for lying. And by resigning before he was impeached and convicted, he "earned" a pardon from his

successor. He was able to claim for the rest of his life – with some success – that he had been hounded out of the White House by his political enemies, who had confused the public into thinking that dirty tricks during a campaign added up to impeachable violations of the Constitution.

And then we elected William Jefferson Clinton, the most attractive, the most intelligent, the most charismatic, the most experienced American politician since Jack Kennedy at least. But we knew that he and the truth were often on different pages. We knew he hadn't been called "Slick Willie" for nothing. Before we elected him we knew about his sexual proclivities. One member of his Arkansas gubernatorial staff was put in charge of coping with "bimbo eruptions". We knew he had had at least a chequered military career. First he said he had never been drafted. Then he said that he had been drafted. First he said he had never had sex with Gennifer Flowers. Then he remembered that he had had sex with her. Once, he finally had to admit he had smoked marijuana. But he hadn't inhaled.

All this, before he was elected President.

And then came Paula Jones's claim that Clinton had sexually harassed her. The President denied everything, a denial for which he was eventually impeached. And then he agreed to pay Ms Jones \$850,000 to make her and her claim go away.

And finally, full circle, came the "Valley Girl" Monica Lewinsky, not really a likely candidate to bring a president this close to disgrace. Was it the sex, or was it the lying?

Here's one vote for lying.

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								FINANCE

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SINCE 1846.

Mandelson's loan

Sir: The disclosure of Peter Mandelson's large loan to purchase a rather upmarket house illustrates how New Labour has become out of touch, showing an attitude of pretentious grandeur compared with so many people who struggle from day to day to keep the roof of what is often a rather small home over their heads.

MPs, whether in government or opposition, are given a very good allowance to enable them to buy or rent more than adequate accommodation when in London away from their constituency homes.

DAN DRAPER
Cowes, Isle of Wight

Sir: I would guess that the majority of people who voted for the Labour Party at the last election did not do so on the understanding that future ministers would choose to "isolate" themselves from some of the workings of their departments, as Peter Mandelson has from DTI decisions affecting Geoffrey Robinson, rather than accept the full responsibility which the job entails.

Could Mr Mandelson please share with us any other areas of his ministerial duties for which he has similarly abdicated responsibility?
HARRY ROBERTSON
London N13

German invasion

Sir: I am very surprised at Ken Livingstone's claim that Oskar Lafontaine has made no proposal for tax "harmonisation" in the EU ("Charm is not enough - now Blair must take on Murdoch", 17 December). I believe he has quite clearly expressed these sentiments and Gerhard Schröder has stated that it is also German government policy.

Mr Livingstone also lauded the creation of a European currency bloc large enough to resist the attacks of speculators which have in the past sabotaged the plans of Labour governments. How much policy latitude does Mr Livingstone imagine future Labour governments would have when monetary policy, fiscal policy, employment policy, and social policy are determined by the EU? A "government" in such circumstances would not be a real government at all and would have no chance of carrying through policies, whether of the right or left, old Labour or new Labour, against the power of the real government in Brussels, Frankfurt, and Berlin.

Lastly, when Mr Livingstone predicts a flood of jobs from Britain if we do not join EMU I must ask why it is that overseas investments in the UK rose by 38 per cent in 1997. Does this suggest that the UK is becoming unattractive as a place for investment because of its decision not, so far, to enter EMU? I think not.
PETER GARDNER
Oxford

Sir: The future is with multi-lingual, multi-racial and multi-cultural nation states such as China, Russia, India, North America and Europe. Our future is obviously within Europe, of which we are a part both geographically and historically; the sooner we realise this the better.

In fact in the next century we shall no doubt see similar movements developing involving South America, Africa, Malaysia and the other Malay-speaking countries, the whole of Australasia, Polynesia and Japan and nearby small states and islands.

We cannot turn aside from these inevitable historical movements, and must negotiate with our European partners in amicable terms to harmonise taxation, financial and social matters. We must not be bloody-minded about this.

We should adopt the euro as soon as possible, not confuse the issue by treating the pound as if it were sacred. The only purpose in having its so-called independence is so that we can adjust its value whenever

industrial inefficiency causes our manufacturing costs to rise too high: useful in the short term only, disastrous in the long run.

Our Eurosceptics talk like a lot of country bumpkins who think that their tiny village boundaries circumscribe the world.
J W HOLMES
Hornchurch, Essex

Star of Bethlehem

Sir: Johann Kepler observed on 17 December 1603 a striking conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Pisces and calculated that a similar conjunction must have occurred in 7BC (Saturday Essay, 19 December).

He speculated that this might have been the true year of Jesus' birth, it generally being agreed that the original dating of the nativity to the year designated 1AD by the 6th century abbot Dionysius Exiguus derived from a miscalculation. Kepler found support for his theory in a Jewish rabbinical reference to a Messiah (Christos) appearing, when Saturn and Jupiter would be in conjunction in the constellation of Pisces.

Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great. As Herod died in 4 BC, Jesus would have been born before that. "Then Herod... slew all the children... from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men..." (Matthew 2:16). Therefore the birth would have been at least two years earlier, say 7-6 BC.

The Magi, being fully aware of the consequences of a rival to the Herod dynasty, deliberately deceived Herod, not only about the place where Jesus was born, but also about the date. The Magians referred to a Samaritan calendar which made 7BC the birth year of the Christ, but Herod understood this to be 5 BC. So he waited for two years and when he discovered his mistake looked for children who were two years old.

A celestial phenomenon coinciding with the birth of a king

would be too good an opportunity for Matthew to miss out of his Gospel.

December 25 is the birthday of Mithras (Sol Invictus), god of the Roman religion jockeying for position with Christianity before the 1st Council of Nicaea. This was convened in 325 by the Emperor Constantine, ostensibly to solve the problem created in the Eastern Church by the "heresy" of Arius of Alexandria, which held that Jesus the Christ was not divine but a created being.

First and foremost, however, Constantine needed the council to create a pre-eminent position of his imperial self. He needed his imperium to resemble the order of heaven, with himself echoing the role of Sol Invictus at the top.

By forcing the attending bishops to formulate a belief structure to which "everybody" would agree (or else), the council tacitly validated the emperor's earthly rule, in return for the imperial acceptance of the bishops and their faith.

December 25 was a convenient date to transfer worship from Mithras to the Christ without fuss.
P R HEMS
Cookfosters, Hertfordshire

Sir: The Archbishop of York has drawn our attention to the humble surroundings of the manger where Christ was born compared with the bombastic "self-glorification" of man represented by the Dome ("Archbishop attacks Dome", 21 December). I wonder if he will ever present this view from a cathedral.
FABIAN ACKER
London SE22

Sir: The National Lottery Charities Board has announced that "since it awarded its first grant in 1995 nearly 11,000 jobs have been created as a result of Charities Board awards". Many of these

Unkind cut

Sir: I read in your newspaper a report by a father about his eight-day-old son, who had part of his penis cut off by a man with no medical training ("My son at the cutting edge", 17 December).

The procedure was not carried out as part of any medical treatment. No anaesthetic was given. Alcohol was administered to the baby after the procedure, supposedly a "primitive anaesthetic". I never heard of an anaesthetic being used after a painful procedure, and in any case alcohol is not a suitable anaesthetic in infants. After the cutting the man sucked the infant's bleeding penis.

The man lied to the parents before the assault by reassuring them that the baby would come through it without any upset. In fact even the father (who endorsed this mutilation) reports that the baby was miserable for "a day or two".

It is not surprising that the mother dreaded the procedure and had to get drunk in order to face the ordeal. She at least understood that her baby was being subjected to a dangerous, unnecessary and painful mutilation, that would

permanently rob him of a body part without his consent.

Babies in this country are being subjected to this treatment every week. Where is the NSPCC? Where is the law of England? Is there no protection for these speechless infants? Surely this is child abuse.

JOHN WARREN
Consultant physician
Harlow, Essex

Sir: So Jack Shamash circumcised his son knowing the risks and arguments against it because, as he says, "I don't really want my son to look different from me." So now we can amputate healthy tissue from our infants for aesthetic reasons. Where will this end? Is there any other part of a child that parents can remove because it doesn't conform to their sense of what looks nice?

Infants are born with foreskins because it is an integral part of the anatomy, not an optional extra. Parents may at the moment have the legal right to subject their sons to surgery without anaesthetic, but do they have the moral right?

As baby Nathan grows I hope his parents keep a copy of *The Independent*. Then he will truly

know that his parents did not traumatise and mutilate him in ignorance, but were completely aware of the risks and damage they were subjecting him to.
SEAN BARTLETT
London SE5

Bail conditions

Sir: You report on Dr Mandeep Dhali's address to the British Psychological Society under the headline "JPs inconsistent on bail decisions" (17 December). I was one of the magistrates who participated in Dr Dhali's survey. I do not consider Dr Dhali's conclusions fair, for the following reasons.

Lay magistrates sit in threes and not as individuals; decisions are therefore based on a consensus of views after all the circumstances have been heard, before it is decided whether or not to grant bail.

There are clear, strict guidelines on the granting or refusal of bail, particularly when bail is refused. Also, when conditional bail is granted, conditions are only imposed to ensure that the defendant appears in court and that nothing is said or done to interfere with potential witnesses or the victim. Each case is judged on its individual merits, considering the nature and seriousness of the offence, the possible way it will be dealt with and the views of the Crown Prosecution Service, the police and the defendant or his solicitor.

Dr Dhali's opinion on consistency does not reflect what we actually do when we sit as a tribunal. Surveys such as this may get Dr Dhali an audience at the Psychological Society's conference, but will not secure co-operation from people such as myself in the future. Before commencing any study, Dr Dhali should observe the subjects or institutions in action; hopefully a more objective result would emerge.

DAVID WILDING JP
Bridge, Kent

Rid Iraq of Saddam

Sir: I have read with great interest the reports that the British Government is in contact with the Iraqi opposition groups and particularly of the Minister of State at the Foreign Office Derek Fatchett's meeting with their representatives earlier this month. I was not invited to that or any other meeting although I am one of the longest serving representatives of exiles in opposition and now chairman of the Free Iraqi Council, the most widely representative group of such exiles in opposition to Saddam Hussein.

Those invited were mainly the same individuals they met with on a number of occasions over the past seven years with, obviously, no visible results.

Nor have I yet received acknowledgement of a letter which I addressed to the Prime Minister, Mr Blair, on 20 November about the situation in Iraq suggesting action which he might consider in support of my fellow countrymen who are the only ones in a position to topple Saddam Hussein, that is living in Iraq, not in the security of exile.

Military containment of Iraq is within American and British capability at any time; the proposed continuation of the isolation of Iraq and its President can only strengthen the latter. A firmer platform might be created for those who might bring about a change if Britain and the United States now show as much determination to organise the distribution by the United Nations of humanitarian aid in Iraq as they have done in recent military action.
SAAD SALEH JABR
President
The Free Iraqi Council
London W8

Top of the class

Sir: In his attempt to help British commerce become the most competitive in the world, Peter Mandelson seems to have overlooked a sector which already is one of the best in the world: higher education ("Mandelson gives £150m boost to entrepreneurs", 17 December).

While thousands of Britons fly to New York to take advantage of competitive shop prices, tens of thousands of students from America (and almost every other country in the world) come here for what is still one of the best educations the world can offer at (for Americans at least) very reasonable prices.

The French are aware of the benefits of this. The government there has recently announced a plan to take over our place as second most popular country for study, after America. As well as the skills and money these students bring, education, as the French Foreign Minister said, is "an instrument of power", giving students an understanding of and liking for the culture and working methods of their country of study.

Yet Britain is uniquely well placed to dominate this market: nowhere else can offer a world language and easy access for both EU and Commonwealth citizens. While the attempt to make the whole economy of world-class competitiveness is clearly welcome, why do we not make more of world-class services we already have?
MATTHEW WRIGHT
Merton College, Oxford

Plinth plans

Sir: Bearing in mind that St Martin has a string of miracles to his name, I dare say you will receive an irate letter from Dr Dawkins at the Rev Hayes' suggestion that a statue of him be raised on the vacant plinth in Trafalgar Square (letter, 21 December).

May I therefore suggest Martin's successor to the Bishopric of Tours, St Briceus, who told Martin face to face that much of what he said was sheer lunacy.
DAVID WALLACE
Hove, Sussex

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



Dressing the cathedral No 3: Dorothy Mathews, a volunteer worker, preparing a mannequin for Ely Cathedral's Nativity scene

Brian Harris

IN BRIEF

jobs were on two or three-year grants. That means they are now going to disappear. NLCB funding, despite any good intentions of its own, has acted as a substitute for public funding. The latter is not going to pick up the tab now. Will next Christmas's NLCB message tell us all the jobs lost as a result of good causes which have been discontinued?
JOHN NICHOLSON
George House Trust, Manchester

Sir: One way of helping to reduce the number of teenage

pregnancies is to stop portraying the girls as sympathetic and even glamorous, as in the picture accompanying Yasmin Alibhai-Brown's article ("A new generation of mothers", 17 December).

Stop presenting teenage mothers - and fathers - as tragic victims of a consumer society or failing education system.

Give them the dignity of holding them responsible for their actions, and show them as the irresponsible and selfish children that most of them are. That might deter others.
FRANK STARTUP
Farnham, Surrey

Case of the fat food critic and his handsome impostor

A MOST curious case is going on in the High Court at the moment, in which a famous restaurant critic is suing a man who, he claims, is masquerading as him. The reason for this is that... well, perhaps an extract from yesterday's proceedings would be enlightening:

Counsel: Your name is...?
Plaintiff: Justin Curleigh.
Counsel: Is that your real name?
Plaintiff: Of course not.
Counsel: Then why did you give it?
Plaintiff: It is the name by which I am known. As Justin Curleigh, I have become one of the most feared and respected restaurant critics in the land. My word alone could bring a restaurant giddy success beyond its wildest dreams.
Counsel: Or, no doubt, empty it?
Plaintiff: Not necessarily. I have

given restaurants such bad reviews that you would think the proprietors would go out and commit suicide, but they have had no effect at all.
Counsel: Could you name one of these insensitive restaurants?
Plaintiff: McDonald's.

Judge: Just a moment, just a moment. Excuse me for butting in, but I had no idea that McDonald's was a restaurant. I thought it was a burger joint.
Plaintiff: It is, my Lord, but they insist on calling themselves restaurants, as if real creative cooking took place on the premises. It is for that reason that all restaurant critics from time to time, almost as a joke, go and review their local McDonald's. They always loathe the experience. They always say so in print. It never has any effect on McDonald's business.

Judge: I see. Carry on.
Counsel: Now, Mr Curleigh, you write a regular column for several top papers and glossy magazines.
Plaintiff: I do.
Counsel: At the top of your column there is a photograph.
Plaintiff: There is.
Counsel: But it is not of you.
Plaintiff: No, it is not.
Counsel: Is it not extraordinary that your column should bear someone else's picture?
Plaintiff: Not at all.
Counsel: What is the point?
Plaintiff: To allow me to eat my meals in peace.
Counsel: Explain.
Plaintiff: Willingly. One of the hazards of being a top restaurant critic - and also author of *Justin Curleigh's Top 100 Restaurants in Britain*, of which I have some



MILES KINGSTON
'I would not be surprised if Craig Brown went out to eat wearing a false moustache sometimes'

signed copies in court with me...
Counsel: That is neither here nor there.

Judge: On the contrary, I'd like one. Plaintiff: That's very kind of you, my Lord. Do you want it signed to anyone special?

Judge: Yes. Just put: "To one of the kindest judges a man could ever hope to meet..."

Plaintiff: No problem.
Counsel: To return to the case in hand, why do you have a photo of a stranger above your column?
Plaintiff: It is one of the hazards of being a top restaurant critic that one is easily recognised and given preferential treatment. It must be very hard, for instance, being Craig Brown, whose picture heads his column and whose noble domed head is instantly recognisable. I would not be surprised if he sometimes went out to eat in a false moustache - though, of course, a false moustache is always tricky if you are

eating a posh meal and you are not used to it...

Counsel: Perhaps a hat, then?

Plaintiff: Perhaps.

Counsel: Or a wig?

Plaintiff: Be that as it may, I wish to avoid that sort of awkwardness. And that is why my employers and I have agreed that my column should be headed by the face of another.

Counsel: In fact, the person in the photo is very different from you.

Plaintiff: That is the whole idea.

Counsel: He is young and quite good-looking...

Plaintiff: Yes...

Counsel: Whereas you...

Plaintiff: Watch your words, young man!

Counsel: Then how would you describe yourself?

Plaintiff: Middle-aged and portly.

Counsel: I think we can all agree on that. So where is the problem, Mr Curleigh?

Plaintiff: The problem is that the young man in the photograph has started posing as me! He has started booking in at top restaurants and eating very expensive meals, using my name!

Counsel: That is certainly very difficult. And what is this young man's name?

Plaintiff: Justin Curleigh.

Counsel: He has the same name as you? What a coincidence!

Plaintiff: Not at all. He changed his name to Justin Curleigh by deed poll.

Counsel: Just to get free meals?

Plaintiff: So it would seem.

Counsel: Extraordinary.

More of this extraordinary case tomorrow...

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Mr Mandelson's most extraordinary lapse of judgement

PETER MANDELSON is not guilty of corruption; nor has he broken any law. But his loan from the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, does represent an extraordinary lapse of judgement.

Mr Mandelson is correct in asserting that there has been no direct conflict of interest between his debts and his job as Trade Secretary. He deliberately declined to be involved in investigating Mr Robinson's business dealings.

But that is not the end of the matter. In outlining the rules for MPs, Sir Gordon Downey made it clear that any benefits "which might reasonably be thought by others to influence his or her actions" must be declared. Ministers must not only be pure, but be seen to be. Company directors often take out loans from their companies at base rates of interest. But those in public life are necessarily subject to more rigorous scrutiny than private citizens, as Tony Blair made clear when he became Prime Minister.

Mr Mandelson's presentation skills seem to have deserted him. How has the spin doctor *par excellence* allowed himself to become ensnared in this way? Why did he not declare the loan at the time? It would have been a matter of comment, but not of scandal. Mr Mandelson is a member of a government committed to transparency and freedom of information: a government that came in on a tide of disgust at Tory "sleaze". He should have realised how this would look if made public.

His numerous enemies will seize on this with glee. His personal style, and his crusade to root out socialism in the Labour Party, have long made him a hate figure for the left, but there has been nothing concrete for them to attack. Now they will have all the ammunition they need. There are influential Labour figures not on the left, including some ministers, with more personal reasons to dislike Mr Mandelson; any of these could have released the information now doing him such harm.

He does seem to realise his mistake. He has admitted that it would have been better if he had revealed the loan, and has asked for the matter to be referred to the Commissioner for Standards in Public Life.

Mr Mandelson should have told his Permanent Secretary why he was declining to get involved in the investigation into Mr Robinson. He should have told the Prime Minister earlier than last Thursday. It was foolish not to. But if subsequent investigations show him to have done nothing else wrong, these are not resigning matters.

Mr Robinson seems to be getting off more lightly. But he has been even more lax than Mr Mandelson, for his reputation was already in the mire. Given his recent admission that he failed to announce a series of business interests, this highlights Mr Blair's mistake in not getting rid of his Paymaster General. This suggests that the



Prime Minister is not as strong as he wishes to appear. He will be damaged by that impression, just as much as by his association with Mr Mandelson, for Mr Robinson is a malign influence at the heart of the Government. He seems to dispense favours even more frequently than he fails to abide by parliamentary regulations.

For the future, the Government needs to consider better ways of handling these scandals. Mr Blair had to decide personally how to handle this lapse; his close friendship with his former spin doctor must throw that responsibility into doubt. No one believes that he would be swayed from punishing wrong-doing by personal loyalty; but the suggestion is there.

The proposal to appoint a separate and independent "sleaze-buster" for ministers, taking such decisions out of the hands of cabinet colleagues, should be resurrected. That is the only way to lift that suspicion from the Government. If that were to be achieved, Mr Mandelson's misjudgement would have done us all a favour.

Israel needs a leader with a sense of history

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU'S fall from power in Israel is hardly a surprise. For two-and-a-half years he has flirted with disaster, turning this way and that, feinting towards peace when the eyes of the world were on him, and then throwing scraps to his hard-line supporters when he thought he could get away with it. "Peace with security", he called it; but his premiership turned out to herald political stagnation and territorial insecurity.

New elections will ensure an unwelcome few months more of instability and uncertainty in Israel. Policy towards the Palestinians will be frozen until a new prime minister and cabinet are established in Tel Aviv.

At this stage, no one knows who will take power. We shall have to hold our breath while we wait to see what emerges,

but as long as Mr Netanyahu and his allies do not survive, the wait will be well worth it.

Netanyahu's premiership has served only to divide Israelis. Now that nation needs a leader with a historic sense of mission, strong and confident enough to compromise over the creation of a Palestinian state. The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin has been felt ever more deeply as the Oslo peace accords have fallen apart. A prime minister who can live up to the best in the Israeli tradition - a Ben-Gurion, or even a Begin - is desperately needed.

Perhaps Ehud Barak, a tough soldier and forthright speaker, just as Rabin was, will be that man. Or the popular Lieutenant-General Lipkin Shahak, who has yet to announce his candidature. A realignment of parties, with small centre groupings and dissident Likud elements uniting around a saner platform than Mr Netanyahu's, is a possibility. Only one thing is certain: the religious zealotry and self-defeating folly of this government should not be allowed to return through the division of its opponents.

So who will end up paying for Geoffrey Robinson's low-cost loan?

FOR AN awful lot of Peter Mandelson's colleagues, Christmas has come early. Revelations of his embarrassment are a present for all the governing family. What a delight for the left, who loathe Mr Mandelson for his leading role in the party's reforms and unguarded pleasure in driving them to the margins of influence. What a festive treat for the hyper-active supporters of Gordon Brown, who resented Mr Mandelson's desertion of their swordman for Tony Blair in the leadership election and have been eating their revenge cold and heartily ever since.

Even the most on-message of New Labourites cannot forbear to smile at the spectacle of the man who demands the highest standards of everyone else being so thoroughly hoisted on his own self-made mishap.

Knowing him a little, I can imagine that this last humiliation will be felt by Mr Mandelson most keenly. All his professional life, he has been driven to make the Labour Party electable. He has worked tirelessly and ruthlessly to strip it of its self-mutilating instincts. Yet, in a single lapse of judgement, he has inflicted a wound to the Government's reputation. You cannot reasonably expect voters struggling with the Bank of England's interest rate Yo-Yo to feel warm towards a senior minister who has avoided such vicissitudes through a privately negotiated base-rate loan.

Had this happened to a Tory minister, Labour would, of course, have been unleashing allegations of sleaze with the abandon of a drunk letting off party poppers - and Mr Mandelson

would have been co-ordinating the assault. All the more extraordinary that a man of his political sophistication should have been unaware of the possible consequences of a large and undeclared loan from someone whose business past was, we may say, colourful, and who, like Mr Mandelson, was bent on a government job.

It must have been clear to both sides that they would be linked by the shared knowledge of the debt and that this would affect their dealings with one another. Hidden links between ministers break the first rule of transparent government by creating a back-channel unknown to colleagues and the public.

As Mr Mandelson now concedes, he should, at the very latest, have declared the existence of the loan when the DTI, where he had become a minister, started investigating Mr Robinson's affairs in September. His failure to register the loan or, as far as the record goes, to share news of its existence with the Prime Minister, indicates that he felt badly about it all along - the surest sign that he was ill advised to make it.

Mr Robinson retorts that he was only seeking to help a "friend in need". Friends in need are one thing; friends in greed are quite another. A true friend would have said to Mr Mandelson, "You can't afford a house in Notting Hill. MPs' salaries are open to public scrutiny and everyone is watching you. *Le tout* Westminster will speculate about where you got the money from. That house, which you intend to design along starkly modernist lines to aid your repose and



ANNE MCELVOY
Old Labour was mindlessly hostile to corporate Britain. New Labour risks becoming mindlessly in hock to it

reflect your general coolness, will not give you a moment's rest. Make do with the Islington flat for now."

But the Paymaster General possesses a dangerous, almost pathological generosity. His pleasantly dithering manner hides a sharp instinct for power and patronage. Like a one-man Santa's Grotto: source of a free holiday home for Mr Blair, trips to the South of France for his Treasury in-crowd and World Cup tickets for the young Brownites.

It is quite hard to stop Geoffrey giving you things when he has a mind to. Once, when I went to lunch at his hotel apartment, he greeted me, as is his way, with a profusion of extravagant compliments and then said, "But your hair's all messed up. I'll get the hairdresser here to come up and do

it for you." It took half an hour's strenuous discussion of the Public Finance Initiative to distract him from unleashing his minion on me.

This eager, slightly impetuous manner draws people closer to him than they might come were they in possession of full and sober judgement. Mr Robinson is instinctively aware of the weaknesses and vanities of his colleagues and their heart's desires. Through his largess, he spreads a little happiness and a lot of his own influence in government. Mr Mandelson is one of Mr Blair's most trusted advisers. When it comes to deciding the future of Mr Robinson, whose continuation as Paymaster General has been under review once already since information surfaced about his off-shore funds and dealings with the late Robert Maxwell, the Trade and Industry Secretary's vote carries weight in No 10.

To speak, as Mr Mandelson has done, of "insulating myself from Geoffrey Robinson's affairs", in these conditions is meaningless.

The real question is why the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry felt he had to live in the splendour of a latter-day Trimalchio in the first place. Petronius's satire on the Roman *nouveau riches* remains the best guide to the ruling elite's desire to express its power in extravagance.

For all his flair, Peter Mandelson is an insecure man. He also senses keenly that Labour is an insecure party, still in awe of its own regained power. Old Peter wanted to emerge from the 1997 election into the bright dawn of government as New Peter:

Blessed with personality, good looks and a rebarbative wit, he emerged from the dowdy chrysalis of the Labour Party to become the favourite of west London's salons. This was not solely the product of vanity. New Labour's fondness for garbing itself in corporate splendour encouraged Mr Mandelson to believe that any interpenetration of money and politics was for the good of the party. A similar delusion has blinded Mr Blair to the way that his uncritical embrace of business is slowly but steadily damaging its reputation for plain dealing.

Old Labour was mindlessly hostile to corporate Britain. New Labour risks becoming mindlessly in hock to it. I am not in the least hostile to business. But I am worried that men with deep pockets and shallow beliefs can gain undue access to and influence over government.

Mr Blair has been slow to see the implications of a pattern of behaviour that began with the acceptance of Bernie Ecclestone's donation and includes the appointment of first Lord Hollick and the Lord Sainsbury as advisers at DTI. Keeping Mr Robinson in a grace-and-favour job in the Treasury while his affairs are under investigation by another department has proved to be sorely misjudged.

New Labour cannot be both the People's Party and the party of Mammon. Forging a corporate Britain plc was not one of the five pledges. Mr Mandelson's deal with Geoffrey Robinson may turn out to be the most expensive low-interest loan ever negotiated. It will be repaid in full by the Government in the year to come.

THE WHOLE world condemned this aggression on Iraq which was carried out to fulfil political objectives and personal ends. Hundreds of Iraqi victims fell to satisfy Clinton's needs. He killed many civilians and destroyed many educational, economic and medical facilities. It is only part of the evidence of the criminal policy pursued by the only superpower in the world, run under the so-called "new order".
Syria Times

BOMBING IRAQ was a mistake. To do so with so little consultation with other countries was a disaster; to do so without fresh authorisation from UNSCOM was even worse. Britain must recover its balance, and start to question what is being done. If Blair's government is so entranced by Clinton that it cannot ask the US Administration directly, then the British opposition should start to ask questions of Blair.
Gulf Times, UAE

MONITOR

ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD
The world press reviews the legacy of the British and US air strikes against Iraq

THE ARAB world needs to get its act together by adopting a clear and coherent stance on the Iraqi situation and on how to deal with it in the aftermath of last week's bombardments of the country. The Lower House of Parliament in Jordan has taken due notice of the bold declarations of Moscow, Beijing and the Vatican and, lamented, rightly so, Arab

inaction. This is as good an occasion as any for the major Arab capitals to coordinate their efforts with Paris, Moscow and Beijing in order to bring back sanity and compassion to the conflict.
Jordan Times


THE STRIKES have done irreparable damage to the United Nations security council's effective mechanism to check Saddam Hussein's evil designs. By far the greatest loss is that

the air-strikes may have prompted a vast number of people in the Arab world to sympathise with the Saddam Hussein regime. Surely, a long-term psychological warfare campaign aimed at turning Iraqis against their ruthless dictator may be the most farsighted option in terms of strategies to replace the present military action Washington so foolishly embarked upon last week.
The Korea Times

QUOTE OF THE DAY
"I would hate the public to think that all MPs insist on having half a million pound houses."
Diane Abbott, Labour MP

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
"Moral indignation is in most cases 2 per cent moral, 48 per cent indignation and 50 per cent envy."
Vittorio De Sica, Italian film director

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PANDORA

BEWARE THE revenge of the Teletubbies this Christmas. A hospital in New York is warning that the Teletubbies have been indirectly responsible for toddlers being injured, and even killed, by their TV sets. Doctors at the Jacobi Medical Center warn that the British-made TV programme encourages kids to tug the TV. "Unfortunately, the children are toppling TVs down on themselves, causing head trauma and other crushing injuries," Dr Ellen Crain, director of emergency paediatric services, told the *New York Post*. There have been 73 cases of injury in the US, with two deaths in the Bronx area of New York alone. Ominously, on Christmas Day BBC2 will feature *Big Bug: The Story of the Teletubbies*.

JOHN EDMONDS, leader of the GMB, one of Britain's biggest unions, and the man who famously denounced boardroom fat cats as "greedy bastards", is himself faced with a spot of industrial unrest. Staff in his press office are to hold a vote on strike action unless Mr Edmonds rescinds his decision to dismiss Tom Condon, the union's spin doctor. Condon has been accused of all manner of misdeeds, including leaking stories to the newspapers about the fact that the union has mislaid £6m. A further irony is that Condon is the former industrial editor of *The Sun*, where he was the scourge of industrial militants.

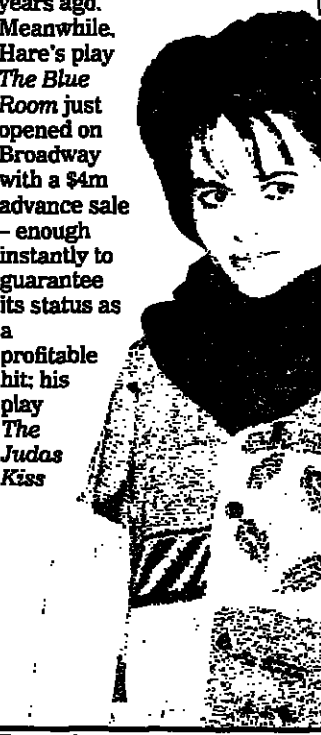
THE ENGLISH playwright David Hare has just been given permission - from the notoriously finicky US Actors Equity Association - to make his Broadway stage debut as an actor. He will star in *Via Dolorosa*, his personal memoir about Israel. The play recently made its London debut at the Royal Court, where Hare, who is married to the fashion designer Nicole Farhi, began his dramatic career in the literary department some 30 years ago. Meanwhile, Hare's play *The Blue Room* just opened on Broadway with a \$4m advance sale - enough instantly to guarantee its status as a profitable hit. The play *The Judas Kiss*

opened in New York last April and another, *Amy's View*, is scheduled to debut in the city next spring. Both *The Blue Room* and *The Judas Kiss* featured stage nudity, most notably Nicole Kidman's bare-bottomed romp in *The Blue Room*. Apparently there is no plan for Hare to disrobe during his dramatic account of *The Holy Land*.

READERS WILL surely recall Pandora's earnest suggestion during the World Cup last June that the FA introduce a way to show how much injury time was left in a match. Despite the wide use of this system in Europe and elsewhere, our own Premier League told Pandora at the time that there was no popular support for the measure. However, the Football Supporters Association had different ideas and urged the Premier League to introduce injury time display boards. The boards are now a fixture at all Premier League matches and a League spokesman told Pandora: "The move came off the back of the World Cup." When pressed, he admitted that they were considered "successful". Of course, Pandora was the last person to say, "I told you so".

HELENA BONHAM-CARTER (pictured), the cinema's favourite English rose, appears as a dying woman in a wheelchair without make-up or elaborate hair styling, in her next film, *The Theory of Flight*. "For one, I didn't have people priming me all the time. And the reality is that I've often been cast for what I look like, and it was a relief not to be cast for that." However, Pandora suspects that Kenneth Branagh, who plays the love interest in the film, was cast partially because he plays that role in real life, although Helena is keen to dispel such an idea. Helena's father was disabled by a serious stroke two decades ago and she used her experiences of life at home, as well as her dad's wheelchair, to prepare for a role that is said to be among her very finest work.

PANDORA HEARS a (possibly apocryphal) tale of a car bumper sticker displayed on a vehicle, observed last week near the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall: "Only two bombing days left to Ramadan."



Why do we buy books for Christmas?



PHILIP HENSHER

Relatives produce works of the sheerest horror - depressing revelations of their perception of you

"UNCLE PHILIP" my niece - blond curls, blue eyes, the works - was saying to me the other day. "What would you like for Christmas?" "God, I don't know," I said. "Anything you like, sweetheart." "Would you like a book?" she said. "Anything you like," I said, wondering whether what I really needed was another book. "What would you like?" she said. "What sort of book?" "Well," I said. "A really good Persian dictionary would be nice. Or a copy of one of Robert Liddell's novels, one of the early ones. Or Kaye's history of the first Afghan war; not the 1857 edition with all the footnotes. Or the first volume of the new catalogue raisonné of Paul Klee. Or Teddy Sheringham's autobiography. Or a reliable edition of *Pseudomonas Epidemica*. Or a copy of *Greenmantle* to replace the one I left on the train this morning. Or..." It was too late: she was off in a corner, as Dorothy Parker puts it, necking with Morpheus, and my chance to get what I really wanted for Christmas was reduced to nil.

Why do people buy books for

Christmas? Surely everyone knows that they're the most personal things in the world, things that you would hardly trust your nearest and dearest to come up with. Even given the strictest possible instructions, people are always apt to produce the wrong thing. After drilling a member of your family for weeks, you open the package on Christmas Day, and they

have somehow contrived to give you, instead of a copy of *Greenmantle*, one of Mr Standfast. And, in any case, it hardly seems within the spirit of Christmas to tell your nearest and dearest exactly what you want and how much they should pay for it.

But without strict instructions, friends, lovers and relations are apt to produce offerings of the sheerest horror - faintly depressing revelations, not of their character exactly, but of their perception of yours.

For some reason, people were always giving me comic novels when I was a boy, and it was always a great struggle not to explain to the well intentioned gift-giver that I had no sense of humour, and would really prefer not to be put under an obligation to read a novel set on a university campus, in which the purchasing of condoms played any part at all, or in which the ordinary English words for the genitalia were misheard to comically catastrophic effect, even if *The Daily Telegraph* reviewer recommended that the novel in question should not be read in a public place.

You sit down on Christmas after-

noon and, chocolate-filled and half-nauseous, gaze at Nigel Williams's best efforts, succumb to the familiar sense that *la vie est triste, hélas! Et j'ai lu tous les livres*.

And yet a quarter of all books sold in this country are sold in the run-up to Christmas.

These are books bought, not for yourself, or out of curiosity, but mostly in the vague sense that "this will do, won't it?" Gift books, in short, books without content, Country Diaries of an Edwardian Lady, and, as Italo Calvino put it: "Books you needn't read, books made for purposes other than reading, books read even before you open them since they belong to the category of books read before being written." Cookbooks; travel books; books of television series; scripts - I'm not making this up - of situation comedies; and, if you feel like a novel, it is most likely to be a sequel to a sequel.

Nobody, except the most raving eccentric, would give *Dead Souls* or *La Vie: Mode d'Emploi* as a Christmas present, so the genre of Christmas books is invented. The most long-lived of these is the amazing

phenomenon of Francis Gay. Most people seem never to have heard of Francis Gay, but every year the books that appear under his name - I expect it is more or less a fictitious trademark of the publisher's invention - make it into the best-seller charts.

There is a little poem, or a half-comic, half-moralising anecdote for every day of the year; uplifting photographs of lambs and daffodils; there is a vaguely Scottish flavour to the whole enterprise. I promise you, it is enough to make you puke. But they sell like billy-oh, and have been doing for decades, in spite of the fact that you have never seen one in anybody's house. Are they kept, like pornography, in drawers? Or perhaps they constitute the Platonic ideal of the Christmas book; perhaps they are given, a thank-you letter is sent, and the *Friendship Book of Francis Gay* 1999 dispatched smartly into the waste-paper bin.

All in all, I must say, I would rather have some nice socks, though I haven't entirely given up on the prospect of the really good Persian dictionary.

Perfect for the White House, a disaster for the Middle East



KEN LIVINGSTONE

It is quite obvious that Benjamin Netanyahu is never going to provide courageous leadership

BRITAIN'S ILL JUDGED and lethal support for Bill Clinton's reckless gamble against Iraq has left us isolated from our European partners and once again an object of contempt and derision throughout the rest of the world. In private conversation it is hard to find any MP who does not believe that the real purpose of the bombing of Iraq was to buy Clinton time and support in his struggle against impeachment. The fact that there is no UN resolution authorising these attacks would, in a world based on justice, leave Bill Clinton exposed to prosecution for war crimes.

Once again the unedifying spectacle of Britain running along behind America, yapping like a demented poodle, has shown the complete absence of any long-term strategic thinking in the Foreign Office about Britain's position in the world. Britain's willingness to go along with Clinton's White House, whether it is by supporting US-inspired sanctions against Libya, Iran and Pakistan, or by bombing Sudan and Afghanistan, leaves us open to the accusation from the Muslim world that we support an anti-Islam policy.

The coincidence of Clinton's military escapades with the fall of the Israeli government has once again served to highlight Anglo-American hypocrisy towards the Middle East. Innocent Iraqi civilians are bombed to death because Saddam has weapons of mass destruction, whereas Israel, which has amassed 200 nuclear weapons, in contravention of all international law, remains the largest beneficiary of American support.

Indeed, for those who have studied the history of the Middle East, there are few more disgraceful episodes than the complicity of President Johnson's White House in turning a blind eye to the early

stages of Israel's nuclear weapons programme.

While the Iraqi people find death raining down on them at regular intervals because they are unfortunate enough to live under a dictator, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been allowed to rat with impunity on one provision after another of the Oslo agreement. He has even started to betray the agreement he personally reached with Yasser Arafat at the Wye peace conference earlier this year. American politicians at all levels continue to prop up this ghastly Israeli government out of fear of the "pro-Israel" lobby on Capitol Hill.

For those of us who hope to see a permanent and lasting peace that allows both Jews and Arabs to look forward to dying in their beds of old age, rather than being blown apart by suicide bombers or the Israeli air force, we have to recognise that what Israel needs is blunt and honest advice rather than double standards and knee-jerk support for the rabid ultra-nationalism of the Likud party.

When I watched the historic

handshake of Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn, I thought that Arafat had most probably signed his own death warrant. Never in my wildest nightmares did it occur to me that it was Yitzhak Rabin who would pay with his life because he was prepared to argue for peace. Although it is easy to dismiss Rabin's assassin as just one of a small handful of murderous fanatics, Netanyahu cannot escape sharing the blame for what happened. The violence of Netanyahu's language in denouncing the Oslo accords as treachery and betrayal helped create the climate of opinion in which the unbalanced mind of the assassin finds reassurance that his act of murder is justified.

Those of us who have travelled through Israel and have been captivated by the charm and humanity of so many ordinary Israelis have found it difficult to come to terms with the growing power and influence of the small, fanatical minority who seem increasingly to dominate Israeli politics. The system of pure proportional representation in Israeli elections allows a party that is incapable of getting more than 1 per cent of the vote, nevertheless to hold the balance of power.

The fact that Israel is split almost equally between hawks and doves has handed power to the small religious parties, which have then skilfully exploited their position to impose a theocratic state on the reluctant mass of liberal and reform-minded Israelis.

The most bizarre example of the power of the ultra-orthodox has been their attempt, by relocating populations, to become an absolute majority inside the city of Jerusalem. As their fundamentalist hold has tightened, liberal and reform-minded citizens have left the city to move to more tolerant areas.



Netanyahu (right) has broken accords with impunity Reuters

What is required in these circumstances is a leader with the courage of Rabin - someone prepared to risk their own political career and perhaps even their life by standing up to the fundamentalists and reaching out beyond them to assemble a clear majority for a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians. That settlement must be based on the rapid creation of full Palestinian self-rule throughout the West Bank and Gaza, so that the leadership can isolate those who will continue to exploit the genuine political grievances of the Palestinians until a final peace settlement gives both Arab and Jew a stake in building a peaceful region.

The key to long-term peace lies in crude old economics. Fifty years ago no one would have believed it possible that France and Germany, having fought three wars in under a century, could achieve their present status. What the founders of the new Europe recognised was that it was possible to bind the French and German economies. They gave the citizens of both countries a personal

stake in peaceful co-development. This is the way forward for Arab and Israeli alike.

It is not enough merely to create some Palestinian self-governing enclave. The best guarantee of peace will be when just a fraction of the wealth that Israel spends on its military arm is diverted towards a major programme of economic reconstruction throughout the area. Then it would be possible to find permanent settlements and employment for the hundreds and thousands of Palestinians who still rot in refugee camps and provide Hamas with their most fertile recruiting ground.

It is quite obvious that Benjamin Netanyahu is never going to provide such courageous leadership. His American style is all too clear in the way he operates politically. Short-term, manipulative, divisive, everything subordinated to securing his own position - he would be a natural in the White House. Unfortunately, in the Middle East these qualities are a recipe for the death and destruction of Arab and Jew alike.

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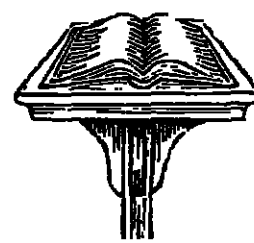
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No literary apartheid in Bosnia



CHRIS AGE

Delivered by the author at the launch of his anthology, 'Scar on the Stone: Contemporary Poetry from Bosnia'

COMPARED TO Serbian or Hungarian or Greek poetry, surprisingly little Bosnian poetry has been translated into English. What has is almost universally weak, both technically and artistically.

It is abundantly clear why this was, and is, so. There appears to be a view widespread in the former Yugoslavia that non-native speakers can easily handle journalistic or literary translation into English. But this reflects a serious misconception. It is exceptionally rare to find a translator who can produce work of real literary or even technical quality in a language that is not his or her own.

After all, it is hard enough to produce work of literary quality even in one's native language. Always a bad policy in prose, translation by non-native speakers in the matter of poetry is wholly misguided since it is nearly always tone-deaf to sophisticated registers of usage, style, atmosphere and meaning.

Translation is an important window on to a country. It shapes the understanding and image of that country. Unfor-

tunately, both the dearth and weakness of previous translations of Bosnian literature can only tend to confirm the worst Western stereotypes - that it is some sort of Balkanized Ruritania where three tribes with unpronounceable names do unspeakable things; that it lacks a serious unified culture within ancient borders as old as those of Western nations; that it might as well be partitioned *de facto* between the cultures of its better-known neighbours.

In contrast, my anthology rows against those stereotypes; since English is the global lingua franca, it opens a large window on the rich and sophisticated poetic tradition of a long-standing people. The outstanding quality of the translations implicitly demands that Bosnian poetry be taken as seriously as the poetry of any other European nation.

Now I will step briefly into the lion's den. A debate is going on in Bosnia as to whether, basically, there should be one or three Bosnian literatures - this latter option based, presumably, on the linguistic differences between the Bosniak, Serbian and Croatian versions

of the language, rather than a crude ethno-religious classification. I am speaking, of course, of a debate within liberated Bosnia.

It is surely understandable that what was once formally called "Serbo-Croat" should be renamed more naturally as Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian. It is also right that every effort should be made within Bosnia to ensure the equality and systemisation of each of

these dialects. But when these justified linguistic considerations begin to intrude into literature, I think we are into dangerous territory. We are into the same obsession with labels that first descended to ethnic-cleansing and then led to the catastrophic Western map-making of successive peace negotiations.

Any critical move towards the idea of three literatures is deeply retrograde. It would mark a partition on ethno-religious grounds. Is that what people in free Bosnia really want after the years of genocide and suffering - to finish the work of the ethnic separatists, to institute a literary apartheid?

There is an alternative that is also opportunity. It involves what might be called a civic state as opposed to an ethnic nationalism. All citizens are equal, both politically and culturally. Just as Irish culture is simply what happens culturally on the island of Ireland - including, of course, the contributions of outsiders - Bosnian culture is simply what happens culturally within the historic boundaries of Bosnia. Actually, isn't there some-

thing artistically simple-minded about the idea that linguistic difference must equate to imaginative or cultural difference - that literature, so fond of holding disparate things in creative unity, should be packaged with new labels according to some different words and pronunciations? Isn't the poetic imagination more likely to thrive on cross-fertilizations within a single tradition than on the partitioning of that tradition?

In this inclusive light, diversity is not sidetracked by what Freud called "the narcissism of small differences"; it liberates rather than Balkanizes. Historic Bosnia is, in fact, unique in Europe for being a nation without a majority - a nation of minorities. As has often been remarked, this is why it is like a polyphony. And a polyphony ceases to be itself if one of the strands is left out, or if the strands are unravelled into something else. As I understand it, the defence of Bosnia was about the defence of polyphony, as I see it, that polyphony in its literary form is best defended by a single Bosnian literature.

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Britain's debt to immigrants



HAMISH MCRAE

Instead of asking whether migrants do well out of Britain, ask if Britain does well out of them

IT WAS a request that could not be ignored. Following David Aaronovitch's column on the positive contribution of immigrants to British society, a reader wrote asking me to look at the contribution from an economic point of view. I'm grateful for the chance, because it is a fascinating tale.

Or rather, three tales – for there are at least three different ways of looking at the economic contribution of immigrants. You can look at the statistics, and see to what extent immigrant groups seem to prosper (or otherwise) relative to the locals. You can look at the disproportionate contribution of immigrant stars – the people who have not just prospered, but have in fact changed the country in some dramatic way. And you can look at the dynamic contribution of migration in shaping economies, and in particular why moving people around may be becoming a more important engine of economic growth.

If you ask the question "how well do immigrants do?", the question that immediately follows is, "which immigrants?", for the picture is very mixed. The best work on this subject probably comes from the Policy Studies Institute, which has produced a series of reports on ethnic minorities in Britain, while the Employment Policy Institute also does helpful research.

So we know quite a lot about how various immigrant groups prosper. Some clearly do very well. Among the "winners" are African and Caribbean women, who earn substantially more than white women; African-Asian and Chinese men also have a higher chance than whites of earning more than £500 a week, and they are less likely to be out of work.

Of course, not all immigrants are from non-white ethnic groups. Other recent figures show that Irish people in Britain now do well, while Americans and immigrants from the EU also seem to be prospering. Incidentally, two of the Law Lords who gave that controversial verdict on General Pinochet were immigrants from South Africa.

By contrast, some immigrant groups find it hard to make economic headway here. There is very



Tony Blair joins the 25th anniversary celebrations of Gujarat Samachar, Europe's best-selling Gujarati newspaper – another Asian success story in Britain *Edward Sykes*

high unemployment among people from Pakistan and Bangladesh, and their households are among the poorest in the country. Caribbean men tend to do badly. There is also evidence of a "glass ceiling" – of well qualified people from immigrant communities not getting as good jobs as their qualifications would suggest they should. On the other hand, the NHS would be in a dreadful mess without the services of African and Caribbean women.

If you turn the question on its head and, instead of asking whether immigrants do well out of Britain, ask whether Britain does well out of them, I suppose the answer would be equally mixed. The country clearly benefits enormously from the contribution of some communities and does not seem to benefit much from that of others.

Looking ahead, I suspect that the performance of immigrant communities will tend to improve rather than deteriorate, for several reasons. For a start, any ethnic disadvantage from being seen as "different" will fade away. This is partly because mixed relationships are booming: half of the Caribbean men and one-third of Caribbean women have white partners. But it is also because some of the professions in which immigrants have been particularly successful – such

as entertainment and sport – are strong growth industries.

In the US, it used to be said that blacks could make it to the top only in music and sport, as though success there were somehow not as valuable or worthwhile as success in business or the law. In fact, those are two terrific professions to be good at; a few stars have a disproportionate impact on the economy.

That leads to the second area in which immigrants make a special contribution: the stars. Immigrant stars burst out in just about every walk of life. If you include second-generation immigrants as well as first, political stars would include Sir Leon Brittan, Michael Portillo and Michael Howard on the right, and Paul Boateng, Keith Vaz, Bernie Grant and Diane Abbott on the left. There is a vast range of success stories in the business community, too – Lord Paul, who runs the industrial group Caparo, and Lord Hamlyn, the publisher, were among the prominent contributors to Labour at the last election.

Lakshmi Mittal, another big contributor, is ranked as Britain's third-richest person and richest Asian, a little ahead of the Hinduja brothers, who are supporting the spirit section of the Millennium Dome – and have been substantial supporters of the Tories.

I haven't seen any comparable statistics, but I would suspect that immigrant businesspeople play a larger role in the economy here than they do in France or Germany, though naturally not in the US. It is self-evidently possible for immigrant business people to "make it" in Britain – so many have.

But the more interesting question is whether any have really changed the nature of our economy. I can think of three post-war examples. One is Siegmund Warburg, who came from Germany in the Thirties and founded the merchant bank SG Warburg. He virtually invented the contested take-over, and played a crucial role in recovering the City's international business in the Fifties and Sixties.

A second example is the Grade family, which came from the Ukraine in the early years of this century. As a family, they were immensely successful in showbiz, with Lew and Leslie Grade and Bernard Delfont all making great successes of their lives. But Lew stood out as the most important single person in developing commercial TV in Britain. Yes, the industry would have grown, but I don't think it would have achieved its popularity so quickly without his leadership at ATV – or had the impact on the stodgy BBC that it did.

My third example would be the Saatchi brothers, whose family came from Baghdad to revolutionise our advertising industry. Two of the world's largest ad groups are now British, the original Saatchi empire (which ejected the brothers, who now run a new agency) and WPP, run by a former Saatchi executive.

The fact that Britain punches above its weight in financial services, the entertainment industries and advertising all has something to do with immigrants.

Looking ahead, I'm fairly sure that migration will become more important, not less. It is not just that a society open to immigrants tends to attract good brains. Only this week a report by the Government suggested that teenagers from ethnic minorities are far more likely to be in full-time education at 18 than their white counterparts.

That human capital – as opposed to financial capital, industrial plant, natural resources and so on – has become the most important single determinant of economic success. Finance? The world markets are awash with money seeking a good home. Manufacturing capability? Foreign direct investment transfers the knowledge of how to make things within a matter of weeks. Resources? They seem to be

getting ever cheaper in real terms. What matters is people. Any country that can become a magnet for talented people will be assured of economic success.

But who are these talented people? What are the talents of the future? In some areas it is easy to see. The City has become a magnet for talent, for if you want to make a pot of money in international finance it is arguably the best place in the world to do so. In the entertainment industries, Britain is a magnet for talent, and sport – well that has become a global business, and we do seem to be able to attract foreign talent to come and work here.

But in other areas it is very hard to know what talent really is. Who could have predicted that writing software for video games would be a great growth industry in Britain? On paper an economically literate immigration policy should seek to attract the highest skilled, and that is certainly what some countries seek to do. But you also need pirates – people who don't have the formal qualifications, but have an overriding desire to make a better life for themselves and their families. I am not suggesting that we should welcome every container-load of refugees who sneak in at Dover. But just a few may become the Lew Grades of the next century.

RIGHT OF REPLY

CLARE BROWN

The head of Child, a national infertility support network, responds to Jeremy Laurance's article on infertility treatment

IN HIS article yesterday, Jeremy Laurance implies that the Intra-Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI) is not closely regulated or monitored. He also suggests that ICSI is offered in a haphazard way, without concern for children born following the treatment, and that the patient's overwhelming desire for a family outweighs concerns about the safety of the treatment. This is not the case.

Infertility treatment is the most regulated field of medicine in the UK. Any clinic offering treatment, storing gametes or embryos, or carrying out human embryo research, is required by law to be licensed by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) – the only statutory body of its kind in the whole world.

I do share some of Mr Laurance's concerns regarding the long-term effects of some forms of infertility treatment. However, I am reassured by the fact that we do have a regulatory body to safeguard patients in the field of licensed infertility treatments.

It is not true that "warnings of potential genetic consequences have zero impact", either on the patients or the clinics. Mr Laurance goes on to state: "The desperate desire for a child guarantees [the issues] will be ignored." The emotional impact of infertility is enormous. However, for those suffering from infertility to be branded as incapable of making decisions regarding their treatment because they are so desperate that all common sense goes out of the window, is downright offensive.

Finally, the article claims that the success rates for ICSI are now 40 per cent higher than for IVF. This statement is incorrect. The latest HFEA annual report states that the average live birth rate for IVF is 16.7 per cent, and for ICSI is 21.6 per cent.

Obviously, infertility treatment such as ICSI must be regulated, and the long-term follow-up of children born as a result is vital. But please, do not make it appear that those suffering from infertility or those working in the field do not care. We do.

Lies and loves of an ugly duckling

FICTION WRITTEN by children's writers often stretches into accounts of their lives as well. AA Milne and Enid Blyton were both far more remote as parents than could ever be guessed from their writing, and WE Johns, creator of that ace pilot Biggles, later developed a fear of flying.

Hans Christian Andersen is another whose public image was at odds with private reality. A rich man for the last half of his life, he was nevertheless sent money by young American admirers appalled at the impression of poverty he continued to give through his habitual meanness and complaining. Nor was he



WEDNESDAY BOOK

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN: THE FAN DANCER

BY ALISON PRINCE. ALLYSON & BUSBY, £19.99

quite the unfailing friend of children he was cracked up to be. His statue, funded by public subscription, was originally to show Andersen reading to a crowd of eager young admirers. He angrily vetoed the idea: he would "never read aloud if anyone was sitting behind me or leaning

up towards me, and even less so if I had children sitting on my lap or my back, or a young Copenhagen boy leaning between my legs".

Alison Prince, in this well researched and readable biography, believes that the particular objection to the young Copenhagen boy derived from Andersen's sensitivity about his rumoured homosexuality. She subtitled her study "The Fan Dancer", seeing him as someone who liked to show off while also keeping his most closely guarded secrets to himself. But although he was always deeply in love with his best friend, Edvard Collin, there is no indication of any physical relationship.

Confused himself, and confusing to others, Andersen seems to have spent his sexually active years masturbating to the extent of doing himself an injury – so proving that those 19th-century medical blasts about the dangers of unrestrained self-abuse occasionally had a point. There were also visits to brothels, where the exceptionally tall, long-nosed and odd-looking author passed the time merely talking to the young women he met.

Prince believes that some of this ambiguity was the result of sexual abuse in childhood. There is no hard evidence for this, or for her more sustained claim that Andersen was an illegitimate son of the Danish Crown Prince, put out to foster parents as a baby (very much as in a fairy tale). This is not a new theory, but it here offers more distraction than illumination. It is just as convincing to explain Andersen's genius, in terms of his childhood, as an unusual, effeminate, possibly dyslexic, almost autistic child, loved to bits by his par-

ents and with the knowledge that he had something great to offer.

His struggle for recognition continued through his life, turning him into an inveterate snob on his travels from one great house to another in search of the approval he so needed. The sense of loneliness, depression and cruelty in his tales all had echoes in his childhood.

His mad grandfather, decked in green like Ophelia, was the butt of the village boys. Terrible schooldays, where Andersen was the chief target of a sadistic teacher, were alleviated only by incongruous treats, such as a class visit to a public execution in 1825. There, he saw three young adults decapitated. The next moment, some superstitious parents hustled "their half-paralysed son, the victim of a stroke, up to the scaffold and forced him to drink a bowlful of blood that ran from their bodies".

At a time when other collections of fairy tales extolled the virtues of self-reliance and ingenuity exemplified by the successful hero or, less often, heroine, Andersen sounded a different note. He spoke of blighted hopes, loss and melancholy. His great story, "The Ugly Duckling", is interpreted by Prince as an allegory about a homosexual who finds nothing in common with surrounding male society. It could also be read as a story about anyone who does not fit in, for whatever reason. Most children know about this experience at some stage. Andersen put young readers in touch with their despair.

This message was usually balanced by passages of great good humour, and there are other scenes in his stories where a general yearning for perfection finds – for a short time – its ultimate realisation. Even so, Andersen was far more a Buster Keaton than the Danny Kaye who appears in the dreadful film about him. Yet it is still difficult not to feel for this lachrymose, self-pitying but ultimately decent man, trapped in a ridiculous body while producing the best fairy tales ever written by one person. **NICHOLAS TUCKER**

'The greatest work of fiction since vows of fidelity were included in the French marriage service'

Edmund Blackadder



BLACK-ADDER
The Whole Damn Dynasty

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WEDNESDAY POEM

FROM 'BILL OF RIGHTS'
BY FRED D'AGUIAR

Brixton market was rough but this is rougher.
I could find saltfish and eddoes near the reggae
Shop that shook my fillings and made my ears ring.

A 37 bus always came eventually –
Often after a long wait – in twos and threes.
And at my council flat there was a hook

Behind the door and a jabbering set
That snowed, drizzled, then cleared after a thump.

Chump chump went the piranhas
On the children who jumped
Unthinkingly into the river
During a spell without supervision.
Oh red river
Howls under water
Blood signalling miles downstream
For more, more piranhas to come feast

Our poems until 8 January come from the 10 volumes shortlisted for the TS Eliot Prize, to be announced on 11 January. 'Bill of Rights', Fred D'Aguiar's narrative poem about the 1978 Jonestown massacre, is published by Chatto (£7.99)

The Rev Lord Soper

DONALD SOPER was the last of those nonconformist princes of the pulpit whose eminence derived not from any ecclesiastical position or title but from force of personality and prophetic authority. For decades, he was one of the best-known churchmen in Britain, firing off witty comments on any topical issue the press cared to raise with him, a broadcaster's dream long before the term "soundbite" was coined.

Methodism, socialism and pacifism were the three pillars of Soper's thought and life, and he lived to see each in danger: Methodism in numerical decline; socialism not to be spoken of amongst New Labour; and pacifism still a rejected dimension of the Gospel. He died in the aftermath of the bombing of Iraq, his grief tinged with bitterness that it should be a Labour government which had unleashed the dogs of war.

Soper was well-blessed by nature — outstandingly handsome even in old age, elegant in dress and manner, quick-witted and genuinely charming. In appearance, he was more Oliver than Isaiah. It was his speech that gave a clue to the power of his mind; his fluency was phenomenal. His sentences were perfectly balanced, his vocabulary prodigious but never flowery or cluttered, and his resonant, perfectly modulated voice had both beauty and power. He could make a routine sentence sound like the Gettysburg Address, and until a few weeks before his death, his voice effortlessly reached the farthest fringes of the crowds who came to hear him at Tower Hill and at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park.

He embodied all the great traditions of Methodism: no faction or pressure group within it could claim him as its own. He was an unapologetic evangelical whose Gospel could be summarised as a faith in Jesus which leads by way of personal conversion to political radicalism. But he had no time for any evangelism based on the uncritical use of the Bible. He found all forms of fundamentalism abhorrent because he believed in loving God with the whole of his mind. It was, he affirmed, the Christian's duty to bring not just fervour but also hard thinking to bear on the life of our time.

He also inherited from Hugh Price Hughes, the great turn-of-the-century Methodist preacher and social reformer, a fierce concern for the poor and down-trodden, which fed him to central mission work where popular preaching was combined with social outreach through centres for the homeless, unmarried mothers and alcoholics. Then, later in his ministry, he developed a high Wesleyan sacramentalism which became the linchpin of his faith. He exchanged his smart grey suit and red tie for a simple black cassock and made the regular celebration of Holy Communion his chief duty.

Most typically, he followed John Wesley into the open air and became one of the great Christian apologists of our time. Just as Wesley, the founder of Methodism, finding pulpits barred to him, took to the market place, the crossroads and the street corner, so Donald Soper, finding the pulpit restricting, went to Tower Hill and Speakers' Corner where the public gathered to argue and interrogate. What G.K. Chesterton did for the faith in print, and C.S. Lewis on the radio, Soper achieved by soapbox oratory.

Soper practised what he called

the "fellowship of controversy", delighting to argue the Christian case against all comers. His way with hecklers became the stuff of legend. He never stooped to score cheap points, but demolished their arguments with amiable wit and often made them his friends. It was one of the sadnesses of his later years that the traditional Speakers' Corner hecklers had given place to humourless fundamentalists who hurled Biblical texts like missiles at him and hooligans trying to break up his meetings.

Soper's critics claimed that he made the classical liberal error of believing that the Kingdom of God could be dissolved without remainder into a socialist state with a pacifist foreign policy; that his theology was superficial. But the open-air speaker must of necessity oversimplify complex ideas or risk losing the crowd. Soper believed that any doctrine which is so abstruse that it cannot be used in public discourse is as near irrelevant as makes no odds. Theology's main task is to make it easier for the Gospel to be heard, anything else it does is just academic business. His old university, Cambridge, obviously had no complaint with his swashbuckling way of treating theology, for in 1988 they made him an honorary Doctor of Divinity.

Soper was born in 1903, precise-

What G. K. Chesterton did for the faith in print, and C. S. Lewis on the radio, Soper achieved by soapbox oratory. His way with hecklers became the stuff of legend

ly two centuries after Methodism's founder, and he outlived Wesley by half a dozen years. He shared not only longevity with John Wesley but also that dogged, almost wilful determination to keep going to the very end, contemptuously shrugging off age and infirmity. As with Wesley, there was no left-over life unspent when he died; God had had all there was of him.

He grew up in a comfortable home in Streatham, south-east London, his mother a headmistress and suffragette, his father a marine claims adjuster, a classical nonconformist, puritan in his principles, Liberal in politics and a preacher with a gift for open-air speaking. At Aske's School, Hatcham, Soper's love for music was nurtured and he developed a virtuosity with the tin whistle which later was to entertain generations of children. He was an all-round sportsman, excelling at soccer, cricket, swimming and, more surprisingly in an incontinent pacifist, boxing. It was at school too, that he first put into words his desire to be a Methodist minister.

He read History at St Catharine's College, Cambridge and then, in 1924, he was one of the first gener-

ation of graduate candidates for the Methodist ministry to be selected for Wesley House, a newly built theological college in Jesus Lane. He left with a First, a membership card for the Labour Party in his pocket and a reputation for being independent-minded to the point of awkwardness.

He spent 10 years in various churches around London, during which time he began his open-air ministry and rapidly became one of the best-known ministers in Methodism, in increasing demand as a preacher, though he often had the pews buzzing with disapproval. His sceptical views on doctrines such as the Virgin Birth, his fierce attacks on capitalism and the arms trade all caused outrage.

Decades before they became fashionable causes, he argued for the ordination of women, championed homosexual rights and attacked cruelty to animals. He was one of the earliest religious broadcasters, heard on air regularly from 1935 until the outbreak of the Second World War, when he was banned because of his pacifist views.

In 1929 he married Marie Dean, a beautiful and spirited lady who was no mere appendage to her husband; she made it clear from the outset that she had no intention of being an unpaid curate. She held the family together during his long absences, kept his feet firmly on the ground and delighted him by her wit and independence — she did not share his almost fanatical teetotalism and had doubts about his pacifism. Soper's family life was a matter for animated discussion in theological college circles in the 1950s. He and Marie had four stunning daughters, and Soper would acknowledge with a twinkle that his following amongst unmarried ministerial students was not entirely explained by his great gifts of leadership.

He was, in 1936, appointed Superintendent of the West London Mission, based at the Kingsway Hall, at that time one of the great London pulpits. His friend and fellow Methodist preacher Leslie Weatherhead was already packing in the crowds at the City Temple and when Edwin Sangster arrived at the Central Hall, Westminster, a famous Methodist triumvirate was in place — identified by irreverent theological students as Sangster loves God, Weatherhead loves the people and Soper loves an argument.

In 1937, Soper became a supporter of the Peace Pledge Union at the urging of the charismatic Dick Sheppard, Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields, whom he came to venerate. A galaxy of prominent pacifists rallied to a cause lent urgency by the sound of distant gunfire in Europe — Bertrand Russell, Vera Brittain, George Lansbury, Aldous Huxley, Charles Raven, Siegfried Sassoon and George MacLeod.

Soper was elected Vice-Chairman of the union and argued the case for pacifism right up to and during the Second World War. It took a special kind of courage to get up at Speakers' Corner during the Blitz and tell his audience they had a Christian duty to love the enemies who were laying waste to British cities every night. He and his family lived in a shelter under the Kingsway Hall and ran a rest and feeding centre for those bombed out. During the darkest days of war Soper launched one of the initiatives of which he was proudest, the Kingsway Preachers,



Soper at Speakers' Corner, London, in 1993. He was then 90

Edward Webb

afterwards renamed the Order of Christian Witness (OCW) — teams of young people who under his leadership conducted missions in towns up and down the country, bringing a message which combined evangelism with social concern. It was through the OCW that a number of young Christians who were later to become outstanding leaders of the Church got their early training.

Throughout his ministry, Soper attracted countless disciples, preeminent amongst whom was Harry Morton, later President of the Methodist Conference and General Secretary of the British Council of Churches. If anyone was likely to inherit Soper's mantle it was Harry Morton, who in his youth was so influenced by Soper that he spoke and dressed like him. He gradually found his own distinctive voice as a prophetic figure on the religious landscape, only to be felled by a series of strokes at the height of his powers.

In 1953 Soper was elected President of the Methodist Conference, a minister who for one year becomes the chief officer of the Methodist Church before being reduced smartly to the ranks again — as Soper,

never lost for a bon mot, put it, "One year it, the next, Ex-It."

The President is expected to be a focus of unity and encouragement for the Methodist people, but Soper exploited his temporary preeminence to attract press coverage for views which were anything but unifying. When a reporter, probing his pacifist convictions in the light of the Cold War, asked him what he would do if the Russians invaded Britain, he replied, "Welcome them with a cup of tea."

He caused uproar and a certain degree of schizophrenia amongst Methodists when he criticised the Royal Family for their addiction to horse racing. They were, after all, loyal subjects of the Queen but also traditionally opposed to all forms of betting, which, said Soper, "involved collecting money on a socialist basis and distributing it on a capitalist basis", plainly the wrong way round.

But the comment of their President which upset Methodists most was made in the context of the growing debate about the possibility of Anglican-Methodist union. He said that, much as he loved Methodism, he feared only slow but certain

extinction lay ahead for an isolated denomination. He did not believe the Methodist tradition had the capacity to renew itself in isolation from the Church of England which was the source of its original inspiration.

He went on to hope that he would end his days as a priest in the Church of England, within which, he believed, it was Methodism's destiny to be a preaching order. The collapse of formal union talks between the two churches in 1968 grievously disappointed him and he became a more isolated and detached figure in the denominational landscape, though still a familiar name and face in national life.

The churches were emptying and the Kingsway Hall closed down. Soper still had Tower Hill and Speakers' Corner: he served on the GLC and became an alderman, and then in 1965 the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, offered Britain's most prominent Christian socialist a new platform, in the House of Lords. Donald Soper became Baron Soper. Some of his friends were bewildered; he had long advocated the abolition of the second chamber and claimed that class divisions were at the root of

many of Britain's problems and frequently expressed republican sympathies. His justifications were tortuous and the simplest explanation is the most likely — he was never one to refuse the offer of a new and influential platform from which to argue the Christian case, and, if the price was a certain amount of lordly flummery, so be it.

His last years were punctuated by celebrations to mark various anniversaries. On his 90th birthday, the BBC transmitted a special *Songs of Praise* programme from Hinde Street Methodist Church. Though he had admirers all over the world and a constant stream of visitors found their way to Soper's north London home to pay their respects, the great public performer was, in fact, a very private man who had outlived his few close friends. Marie's death in 1994 devastated him, and exposed a deep well of loneliness, though he was sustained by generations of a loving family.

Rendered increasingly infirm with a form of arthritis, he finally became quite immobile, his mind as sharp as ever but his body a dead weight. Yet twice a week, regardless of the weather, he was manhandled out of his house into a car and lifted by main force on to his soapbox at Tower Hill and Hyde Park. It was a majestic demonstration of sheer indomitable Christian will.

If his determination to carry on his open-air ministry right to the end was one example of his awesome single-mindedness, the massive consistency of his pacifist witness was another. Over 70 years he never deviated from the belief that the use of force could not in any circumstances be reconciled with the spirit of Christ. Wars and conflicts came and went, and at Speakers' Corner, they were analysed, chewed over and argued about. Soper's attempts to spell out a better way seemed to his critics naive or hopelessly idealistic, but for him, pacifism was a testimony to the perfect law of the Kingdom. It was what Jesus commanded, and that was that.

He was a prophet, not a strategist, and it is the prophet's job to call down the wrath of God on a disobedient society, not to propose detailed programmes of action. Confronted on television by concentration-camp survivors who asked him what other than massive force could have smashed the Nazi tyranny which destroyed them in millions, he had no convincing answers. But his belief in pacifism was not shaken; the critics might berate him but he would not budge.

Donald Soper was a holy man but not a solemn one. Arguably the most influential Methodist leader of the 20th century, his unique ministry touched the life of church and nation at many points, and he discharged his ordination vows not just with utter faithfulness but with that indefinable quality, style. His was a gallant, debonair faith, yet under all the layers of sophistication he was at heart a simple believer: Jesus was his master and friend right up to the end.

COLIN MORRIS

Donald Oliver Soper, minister of the church: born London 31 January 1903; Superintendent, West London Mission, Kingsway Hall 1936-78; President, Methodist Conference 1953; created 1965 Baron Soper; Chairman, Shelter 1974-78; married 1929 Marie Dean (died 1994; four daughters); died London 22 December 1998.

Janet Murrow



'Only a girl born in Middletown, Connecticut, who went to Mount Holyoke, would think twice about inviting in the man who saved her life!'

JANET MURROW saw the Second World War from a front-row seat. In 1937 she and her husband, Edward R. Murrow, later the United States' best-known broadcaster, moved to London. At the beginning of the war she worked with Mrs Winston Churchill in the London "Bundles for Britain" Office. She stayed at the White House the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. She was one of the first recipients of the King's Medal for Freedom, awarded for her contribution to Anglo-American relations. Later, she gave great support to her Alma Mater, Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, America's pioneer institution for the education of women.

She was born Janet Brewster, in 1910, a Connecticut Yankee of Anglo-Swedish stock, the elder daughter of a prosperous car dealer, whose ancestor had crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower*. Kingman Brewster, President Carter's American Ambassador in London, was her first cousin. In late 1932, when she was the president of the student body at Mount Holyoke, she happened to share a carriage with Ed Murrow on a train journey down to New Orleans. Both were on their way to a conference of the Institute of International Education, which helped to bring out refugee German scholars. Murrow had just become its Assistant Director. Janet Brewster was doing postgraduate work in economics and was a gifted summer reperto-

ry actress. The fellow travellers' long discussion was not limited to the conference agenda. In New Orleans Murrow invited Brewster to breakfast. He ordered strawberries. It was midwinter and she was impressed.

After a courtship largely conducted by letter they married in 1934, honeymooned in Mexico, and settled in New York. A year later the Columbia Broadcasting System engaged Murrow as Director of Talks, and in 1937 sent him to London as its European Director. Murrow did not act as a reporter himself until pressed into service the night Hitler's storm troops took over Austria. He then made the first of over 5,000 broadcasts to the United States which rapidly brought him to the front rank of American radio correspondents and made him a popular hero on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the early weeks of the war Janet Murrow helped to evacuate schoolchildren from London to the countryside. She also broadcast for the CBS network, contributing short sketches of Britain at war. Shortly before Christmas 1940 she organised the London Office of Bundles for Britain, working alongside its honorary chairman, Clementine Churchill, who became a close friend. By the middle of 1941 American women had sent to Britain 500,000 pieces of clothing, 72 mobile feeding units and \$2.3m in contributions. After Churchill became Prime Minister the Murrows were frequent guests at 10 Downing Street.

On the first night of the London Blitz, while Murrow prowled the streets gathering information, Janet climbed through the roof door of their Hallam Street flat, close to Broadcasting House, to watch the bombardment of the East End. As the planes drew nearer she headed for the stairway door which had snapped shut from the inside. Shrapnel fell around her as she tried desperately to signal for help from pedestrians running for shelter in the street below. Eventually she caught the attention of a lone passer-by who raced up six flights of stairs to release her and conduct her safely to her flat. Janet subsequently told Murrow of her dilemma. Should she invite him in for a drink? Would

he think it improper? She decided she had better not.

Murrow, the youngest son of a poor lumberman's family in the American North-West, laughed uproariously. "Only a girl born in Middletown, Connecticut, who went to Mount Holyoke," he declared, "would think twice about inviting in the man who had just saved her life!"

During the heavy bombing of London Janet Murrow was again busy arranging for the evacuation of children, this time not to the English countryside, but to homes generously offered in the United States. She served on the British-American Liaison Board, which helped to ease friction between American GIs and British civilians. She travelled

throughout England lecturing for the American Embassy and for the Ministry of Information on American life to schools, civil defence units and other groups. She also gave a course on American history on BBC schools programmes. In 1946 she was awarded the King's Medal for Freedom in recognition of her services to international understanding.

In autumn 1941 the Murrows returned for a short visit to the US — their first since Christmas 1938. On 7 December they were getting ready for a game of golf in Washington to be followed by supper at the White House and a private briefing for President Roosevelt on the situation in Britain. The news of the Japanese bombing of the American fleet at Pearl Harbor broke that afternoon. When Janet telephoned the White House she was told the meal was still on. The Murrows ate scrambled eggs with Mrs Roosevelt while the President conducted a cabinet meeting.

Murrow's turn in the Oval Office came shortly after midnight. Roosevelt asked him about morale in England and told him of the actual damage at Pearl Harbor: "Did this surprise you?" "Yes, Mr President." "Maybe you think it didn't surprise us!" Murrow said later: "I believed him."

The President had not declared that his remarks about the damage to the fleet were off the record. Janet Murrow watched her husband pace the hotel room for the rest of that

night trying to decide whether he should tell the story the President had given him. In the end he decided he ought not to, in the interest of national security.

In 1944 Murrow began an affair with Pamela Churchill, the daughter of Lord Digby — the separated wife of Randolph Churchill and later, as Pamela Harriman, President Clinton's ambassador to France. Their relationship was open knowledge, and Janet Murrow subsequently described it as "Quite an experience for Ed... She was a great beauty."

In September 1944 Janet, exhausted both by her work and the strain on her marriage, returned to the United States. Murrow sent her many conscience-driven letters and cables, and in November he flew out to join her. They had a holiday in Florida, played golf, and had a good time, she recalled.

It was particularly good because at 35, after 10 years of repeated disappointments, Janet found herself pregnant. Their son, Casey, was born in London in November 1945. Murrow returned to New York in mid-December to discuss his future with CBS. Pamela, whose divorce from Randolph Churchill was now absolute, headed also for New York and for 10 days she and Murrow went everywhere together. He returned to London to tell Janet he wanted a divorce. Three weeks later he called Pamela in Palm Beach: "Casey wins." She was shattered.

The Murrows flew home to New York in March 1946, leaving many friends from their nine years in London. Janet was deeply involved in motherhood and in establishing homes in both New York City and Pawling, NY. Ed steadily enhanced his reputation with radio news analyses and television documentaries, notably *See It Now*, the programme which toppled Senator Joseph McCarthy.

In 1961 President Kennedy made him Director of the United States Information Agency. A heavy chain smoker, in 1965 he died of a brain tumour. The Queen had awarded him an honorary knighthood shortly before his death.

Janet, who had always hankered after an academic career, returned to Mount Holyoke College in 1970. She worked for nine years in its Art Museum, eventually becoming the Executive Director of the Art Advisory Committee. She also served for two 10-year terms as a member of the Board of Trustees, and travelled widely, raising over \$2m on behalf of the college. She frequently came back for long periods to stay in England, her second home.

LEONARD MIALI

Janet Huntington Brewster, public servant: born Middletown, Connecticut 18 September 1910; married 1934 Edward R. Murrow (died 1965: one son); died Needham, Massachusetts 18 December 1998.

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all of the cake. She'll
over which bird to ha

Bill Allen

BILL ALLEN was a polymath. He had a flair for finding relationships between science and design which set him in good stead for a wide and varied career. Over the years he served as Chief Architect (and Deputy Head, Physics) of the Building Research Station, Garston (now the BR Establishment), Principal of the Architectural Association School, London (1961-66) and a founding partner in 1962 of the London-based architectural practice of Bickerdike, Allen & Partners which currently employs a staff of 50.

John Bickerdike (who died in 1982) and Allen complemented each other in the practice. Bickerdike's strength was that of the architect-designer while Allen's commitment to architecture, science and technology allowed for a wide range of commissions. Both worked closely together on the designs of the Royal College of Music, Manchester, and the Royal Academy of Music, London.

The Bickerdike Allen Partnership has become widely known as one of the leading-edge consultancies in the field of building defects, litigation and repairs. It specialises in the resolution of the design and construction problems that affect modern buildings. It was however in the fields of acoustics, lighting, constructional technologies that Allen excelled, and he developed the consultancy's services in these specialist areas.

Architect, educator, lecturer, landscape painter and scientist *manqué*, Bill Allen came from a distinguished family of Canadian academics. It was his father, a professor of physics at the University of Manitoba, who introduced his son into the "black art" (as Bill Allen called it) of acoustics. His brother is Emeritus Professor of Physics at St Andrews and his sister was both a photographer and an economics professor.

In 1932, Allen began his career at the University of Manitoba's School of Architecture graduating in 1936 with the university's Gold Medal.

Forfeiting an opportunity to go to Harvard, he moved instead to England in 1936. Here he worked for Louis de Soisson in Welwyn Garden City, where he resided for the rest of his life and where he designed his family house. He lived for his work and his family and never stopped talking about either.

He was a good companion and a totally reliable source of information and good advice. His impish sense of humour and wonderful Canadian accent made him a great raconteur. He could live up any discussion or even - as I experienced on many an occasion - a boring debate or a dull committee.

After his stint in de Soisson's office, he moved on to the Building Research Station, near Watford, as a building researcher. There in the post-war period he became deputy head of physics and led a BRS acoustics team in the design of the Royal Festival Hall. From 1954 to 1961 he was Chief Architect, BRS, before taking up the challenging post of Principal of the AA School, London, where he stayed until 1966 despite the school's avant-gardists' distrust of his scientific background. For some of them architecture and analytical science did not mix. For Bill Allen it was inextricable.

He encouraged the teaching of the principles of construction at the AA School, bringing in many of the building scientists he had worked with at BRS to give lectures, crits and seminars. His interest in science and technology was leavened by a genuine passion for architectural history and theory. A number of architectural historians and Modern Movement architect theorists came in - including myself - to broaden the basis of teaching in this area. He also encouraged the publication of research studies and technical theses.



Principal of the Architectural Association School, London, 1961-66

A decade of so ago he changed from ing scientists he had worked with at BRS to give lectures, crits and seminars. His interest in science and technology was leavened by a genuine passion for architectural history and theory. A number of architectural historians and Modern Movement architect theorists came in - including myself - to broaden the basis of teaching in this area. He also encouraged the publication of research studies and technical theses.

Bill Allen chaired or served countless committees and councils including the RIBA, of which he was a Vice-President, and the Institute of Acoustics, of which he was a joint founder. He received many honours including Commander of the Order of Merit, Portugal (for his work for the Gulbenkian Foundation), an Hon LLD from his own university (Manitoba), and honorary fellowships from the American and New Zealand Institutes of Architects.

had never told Bill a joke!" Allen was never bored by office routine, but always encouraged those around him to achieve ingenious results of high quality, whether a report or a design.

Over the past few weeks Allen had lectured in the US and after returning home immediately went straight off to Lisbon to continue work on the third redesign of the layout of the Gulbenkian Museum. By all accounts, he came home exhausted and ended up in hospital in Welwyn Garden City.

At the age of 73, Allen had relinquished his partnership in the practice to become a consultant and to give himself the time to produce his book *The Building Envelope* (1997). It was no ordinary technical handbook, rather an extraordinary account of both a technical subject and a career. It was inspired and dedicated to his own mentor, R. Fitzmaurice of the BRS, the main author of *Principles of Modern Building*, the first volume of which was issued in 1939. It was Fitzmaurice who, as Allen explains, fuelled his own enthusiasm for a marriage between architecture and science. His book, with its autobiographical slant, is itself a record of this union.

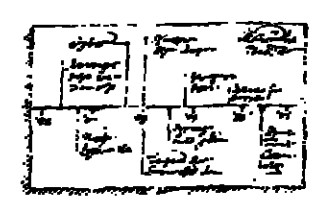
DENNIS SHARP

William Alexander Allen, architect: born Winnipeg, Canada 29 June 1914; CBE 1980; married Tessa Pearson (two sons); died Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire 14 December 1998.

He had an acute awareness of the odd, strange and comic events in life, illustrating Arthur Koestler's contention that such associations are the well of creativity

being a leading acoustics expert - after his own hearing failed - to become an expert in display lighting, particularly the lighting of museums, galleries and individual objects as his work at the National Gallery, Waddesdon Manor (for Jacob Rothschild) where he introduced pin-point fibre optics into display cabinets to highlight the object and obviate heat gain, the Divinity School, Oxford, the Frick Collection, New York, and the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, a job he was still working on the week before he died.

But honours were not exactly his game. His game was work. This he pursued with intelligence, tremendous energy and boundless enthusiasm. He combined his huge interest in people, places and things with an acute awareness of the odd, strange and comic events in life, thus perfectly illustrating his friend Arthur Koestler's contention that such associations are the well of creativity. A former partner recalls that "the hardest criticism he made of an acquaintance of some 20 years was that he



HISTORICAL NOTES ALAN RUSH

Rape, pillage and slaughter in Baghdad

RECENT ATTACKS on Iraq have been regretted by almost everyone familiar with the history of that benighted land. Its historical records are packed with evidence that it was a dangerous place long before Saddam Hussein gained power. And so it will surely remain until generals and statesmen, like scholars, attempt to enter the Arab mind and learn from the past. Meanwhile, ancient conflicts are re-enacted with the same results - the alienation of the Iraqi people and the prolongation of a tradition of violence that has haunted Baghdad for centuries.

Founded in AD 762 as the capital of the Abbasid Caliphs, Baghdad became a centre of Islamic culture and a nodal point on the trade routes connecting India, Persia and China with Europe and Asia Minor. The decline that followed its subjection to the Mongols in 1258 ended in the 16th century when it joined the Ottoman Empire. After Turkey's defeat in the First World War, the region became a British mandate. With British support a Hashemite monarchy was established in 1921. Its British connections were always unpopular and never more so than after the Suez crisis. In July 1958, the royal family was massacred and Iraq became a republic in which the Baath socialist party acquired the powers which are now monopolised by Saddam Hussein.

Against this backdrop, the

early 19th century stands out as a period of strife, destitution and foreign intervention. The region, then called Mesopotamia or Turkish Arabia, was ruled by Mamelukes. Although officially servants of the Ottoman sultans in Constantinople, they wielded power locally. Like Saddam Hussein, however, they lived in constant dread of deposition - or worse. Of the nine Mamelukes who ruled Iraq until 1831, six were either murdered or executed.

The last Mameluke ruler, Daud Pasha, was born in Tiflis in 1767. He was sold as a pretty child in Baghdad's slave market and later in life he exploited his looks, erudition and connections to ensure a brilliant career. As "Pasha of Baghdad, Bussorah and Courdistan", he dazzled visitors with the splendour of his audience chamber, the uniforms of his guards, the ceremonials of his court. "His state," wrote the dilettante and archaeologist Sir Robert Ker Porter, "was perfectly that of a royal prince." Beneath the surface, however, violence was endemic. Accounts of the period state that "towns and lands were sold to be governed by this or that favourite slave or genial courtier; Aghas still bullied, troopers still raped and robbed". British traders deplored the Pasha's disapproval of their privileges, while the Sultan, Mahmud II, as a moderniser and devotee of Rossini operas, consid-

ered him and all Mamelukes an offensive anachronism. In 1830 orders arrived from Constantinople: Daud Pasha must surrender his authority to direct Turkish rule.

The events which followed his refusal to obey were horrifying. After the strangling of the Sultan's emissary, Turkish armies were sent to install the appointed successor, Ali Ridha. Meanwhile another force had arrived - the plague. In April 1831, 7,000 people fell victim to it. As Ali Ridha's sponsors besieged Baghdad, famine set in. Dogs devoured the dead while orphans wept and adults looted and burned the grandest houses including the Pasha's. The Tigris river then flooded its banks and destroyed 7,000 houses.

In September, Daud Pasha accepted a compromise enabling him to save his honour and guarantee his Mamelukes compensation for accepting the new regime. The latter were assembled in the palace courtyard when Ali Ridha made his entry. Within minutes his Albanian guards had received secret orders. Rushing forward they slaughtered the Mamelukes to a man. Meanwhile Daud Pasha had left Baghdad for his estate at Bursa. After a period of rest, he became Wali of Bosnia and, finally, Guardian of the Prophet's Tomb at Medina, where he died in 1851.

Alan Rush is the editor of *Records of Iraq* (Archive Editions: 15 volumes, £3,995)

'There won't be a Christmas in Lockerbie'

LOCKERBIE AWOKE yesterday to a chill, grey sky and a noisy reminder that small-town life would never be the same again. A Sea King helicopter clattered overhead, disturbing the dawn. It swung towards the hills at the eastern edge of town. There, the night before, a horror story had unfolded. Wreckage from the stricken jumbo jet and dozens of bodies had hurtled through the darkness to the ground. Part of an engine came to rest by a beech tree. The bodies were strewn about the grass fields.

Retired policeman Alan Place heard a bang, a whistling noise, and then the sound of debris falling on his roof. He joined the search for survivors, but found only bodies: 40 within one and a half miles of his home. He said yesterday: "They had bounced and left craters in the ground. It was a horrific sight."

Down the slope, in a field abutting back gardens in Rosebank Crescent, there were three aircraft seats, still joined together. A Pan American In-Flight Duty Free Shop brochure was stuck on a fence. "Play and win. See inside" was written across the bottom right-hand corner.

An AA sergeant, Scott Maxwell, was one of the first people on the scene. He called in emergency services on his van radio after the crash had put local telephones out of operation. Mr Maxwell had just finished work and returned to his home in West Acres, Lockerbie, when the crash happened. "Even through the closed curtains I could see a massive orange ball lighting up the outside of the house," he said. "My daughter was upstairs in her bedroom and started scream-

ing. I rushed outside and saw a ball of flame 200 yards to the rear of the house.

"It hit the main road and then bounced on the top of the houses there. The devastation was horrific. The damage to the houses, the bodies - words just can't describe it."

The wreckage hurtled over the railway lines which dissect the town, and headed west. It sliced off the roofs of some houses overlooking the busy A74 dual carriageway, the main road from Glasgow to Carlisle. Then it flattened maybe six others, setting them alight.

In the mayhem of falling wreckage and a blazing shower from thousands of gallons of spilled jet fuel, a huge crater was formed beside the easternmost carriageway. Five cars travelling south on the road were engulfed, their occupants dead. A maroon Vauxhall Cavalier was still there yesterday morning. Its mock-tigerskin upholstery was sprinkled with glass from the broken windscreen. It was angled across the carriageway, which had completely disappeared beneath mud and boulders gouged from

the crater, some 70 yards long and 15 deep.

The wreckage which caused this terrible damage must nearly have passed over the home of Annie Rafferty, 77. She was out when the disaster happened, but she could not return to her home on Wednesday night. Two boulders had torn through the roof of the building. Yesterday morning, after spending a night at the King's Arms, she tidied up her doorstep with a dustpan. "It's terrible. It's terrible. It really is," she said. "What a crash that must have been. There were bairns too. It's pathetic."

In a few seconds, this quiet respectable market town in Dumfriesshire had become a disaster area. On Wednesday night the roads were full of police cars, fire engines, ambulances and flashing lights. The town hall had become a mortuary. The community centre was a resting place for emergency teams drafted in from all around.

An RAF mountain-rescue Land Rover was parked on the pavement outside the Presto supermarket. The cars of scores of television crews, reporters and photographers lined the main street. But there was still tinzel in the shop windows. In Moffats, a newsagent's in the high street, Margaret Tweedie sold the papers as usual. The front pages told of the night's tragedy. "Everyone is very sad. They are devastated," Mrs Tweedie said. "It's horrifying really. There certainly won't be a Christmas in Lockerbie."

From the front page of *The Independent*, Friday 23 December 1988

GAZETTE

DEATHS

BURGNER: On Tuesday 22 December, peacefully in Barnes General Hospital, Dodo, much-loved mother of Anja and Tom, grandmother of Clare, Nicola, David, Steven, great-grandmother of Byron and Olga. Funeral 24 December, 12.45pm. Golden Green Crematorium. No flowers, donations, if desired, to the Association of Jewish Refugees.

McTAGUE: George, 21 December, peacefully in hospital, of Harrogate, North Yorkshire, aged 82 years. Much-loved husband of Nora, dear father of Teresa, Peter, Michael, Eileen, Paul, Maura and Fiona, a dear father-in-law and Grandad. Requiem Mass will be celebrated at St Robert's RC Church, Harrogate, on Thursday 24 December at 10.30am, followed by interment at Stonefield Cemetery, Harrogate. Any enquiries to Mahony & Ward, Pidsley, telephone 0115 2563399.

WELL-JONES: Robert James, beloved son of Ann Pauline and John Powell-Jones, father of Stella. Died in York, 17 December. Funeral: St George's RC Church, George Street, York, 11am, 24 December.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

MEMORIAL SERVICES

SAINSBURY: A service of thanksgiving for the life and work of Lord Sainsbury will be held in St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey, at noon on Thursday 14 January. Those wishing to attend are asked to apply in writing, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, to: The Assistant Receiver General (Protocol), Room 14, The Chapter Office, 20 Dean's Yard, Westminster Abbey, London SW1P 3PA. Tickets will be posted by 7 January.

Announcements for BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In memoriam) are charged at £2.50 a line (VAT extra).

APPOINTMENTS

Mr Richard Muir, to be ambassador to the State of Kuwait.
Mr Bill Stow, to be UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the European Union at Brussels.

Dr David Clark MP, to be Chairman of the Atlantic Council of the United Kingdom.
The Most Rev Dr R.H.A. Eames, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, to be an Honorary Bencher of Lincoln's Inn.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

The Household Cavalry

Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

BIRTHDAYS

Emperor Akihito of Japan. 65: Queen Silvia of Sweden. 55: Sir Franklin Berman, legal adviser, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. 59: Mrs Christine Bicknell, former Chairman, CSSB. 79: Sir Norman Biggs, banker. 91: Lord Blake, former Editor, *Dictionary of National Biography*. 82: Mrs Helen Brington MP. 44: Professor Timothy Burt, Master, Hatfield College, Durham University. 47: Mr David Davis MP. 50: Sir Peter Davis, chief executive, Prudential Corporation. 56: Mr Maurice Denham, actor. 89: Mr John Guinness, chairman, British Nuclear Fuels. 63: Mr Youssef Karshi, portrait photographer. 90: Mr Graham Kelly, former chief executive, the Football Association. 53: Professor Peter Lachmann, President, Royal College of Pathologists. 67: Miss Belinda Lang, actress. 45: Mr Christopher Lawrence, goldsmith, silversmith and modeller. 62: Miss Joan Quennell, former MP. 75: Mr Helmut Schmidt, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. 80: The Rev Christopher Turner, former Headmaster, Dean Close and Stowe Schools. 69: Mr Rayner Unwin, chairman, Unwin Enterprises. 73.

van Mieris the Younger, painter; 1689; Sir Richard Arkwright, inventor of the spinning frame. 1732: Alexander I, Tsar of Russia. 1777: Jean-François Champollion, Egyptologist and decipherer of the Rosetta Stone. 1790: Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, writer and critic. 1804: Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints). 1805: "Lord" George Sanger, circus proprietor. 1827: Joseph Arthur, first Baron Rank, miller and film magnate. 1888.

Deaths: Henri I de de Lorraine, third Duc de Guise, assassinated 1588; William Davidson, Scottish Secretary of State to Queen Elizabeth I. 1608: George Catlin, artist and writer. 1872: Laurence Oliphant, journalist and traveller. 1888: Jean-Baptiste Edouard Detaille, painter. 1912: Anthony Herman Gerard Fokker, aircraft designer. 1939: Charles Dana Gibson, artist and illustrator. 1944: Hideki Tojo, former Japanese prime minister, hanged 1948; Eric Coates, composer. 1957: Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, first Earl of Halifax. Viceroy of India. 1959.

On this day: HMS *Bounty*, commanded by William Bligh, sailed from Spithead for the South Seas. 1787: the poem "Twas the Night Before Christmas" (its true title was "A Visit from St Nicholas"), by Clement

Clarke Moore, was printed in the *Troy Sentinel*, New York, 1823; Joseph Hanson patented a type of cab. 1834: the Aldwych Theatre, London, opened. 1905: a bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge, Viceroy of India, as he entered the new capital at Delhi. 1912: the Federal Reserve Bank was founded in the United States. 1913: in Germany, Marinus Van der Lubbe, a Dutchman, was found guilty of setting fire to the Reichstag and was sentenced to death. 1933: Managua, capital of Nicaragua, was destroyed by an earthquake, with a loss of 12,000 lives. 1972.

Today is the Feast Day of St Dagobert II of Austrasia. St Prithbert, St John of Kanti, St Servulus, the Ten Martyrs of Crete, St Thoralac and Saints Victoria and Anatolia.

LECTURES

Victoria and Albert Museum: Caroline Rimmell, "Ceramic Tiles", 2pm.

LUNCHEONS

HM Government: Mr George Robertson MP, Secretary of State for Defence, was the host at a luncheon held yesterday at Admiralty House, London SW1, in honour of Mr Rudolf Scharping, Minister for Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany.

You ask the questions

(Such as: Richard Dawkins, do people find you intimidating? Or have you made science sexy?)



Richard Dawkins, evolutionary biologist and author of *The Selfish Gene*, was born in Nairobi in 1941. He was educated at Oxford University and became the first Charles Simonyi Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University in 1995. He lives in Oxford with his third wife, the actress Lalla Ward, best known for her role in *Dr Who*, and has a daughter, Juliet, from a previous marriage. His latest book, *Unweaving the Rainbow*, is published by Penguin.

Would you say Darwin is sexist, and would you say you're sexist?
Andrea Crane, Norbury
I don't think Darwinism is particularly sexist. But if it were, I'm afraid that would be just tough, for the truth is no respecter of political preferences. I disapprove of discrimination against (and in favour of) women. I support what I think of as the good parts of feminism, while laughing at the pretentious parts – like saying gender when you mean sex. I get an obscure pleasure from the fact that more than half these questions were sent in by women. Is that sexist?

Is there some sort of arcane link between your background and the fact that your wife, Lalla, was in *Dr Who*?
Joanna Martin, Cornwall
No. But she did read Darwin's *Origin of Species* when she was 14 and before we met she had read all my books, including *The Extended Phenotype* which was written for

professional biologists. The statistician in me reluctantly points out that even this is less of a link than you might think – because it is hard to name a book Lalla has not read.

Was Mother Teresa selfish?
Jane Appleby, Nottingham
The answer may be a surprising "Yes". A good case has been made that Mother Teresa was callously uncompassionate towards her patients, being more interested in saving their "souls" than in relieving their suffering. She may have believed she was buying her place in heaven. Others have devoted their lives to deeds as saintly as Mother Teresa's, but without her hope of posthumous reward.

I hated biology at school but loved your book. Have you made science sexy?
Chloe Gibbard, Colchester
Not for me to say. I hope you think so.

Who would you most like to have dinner with tonight?
Harlan, Warwick
David Attenborough. I actually am supposed to be having dinner with him tonight but I'm developing a cough and have a horrible feeling I'm going to have to cancel.

When was the last time you cried?
Kathy Atkinson, Sheffield
I am quite a soppy person and a book can bring me to tears. It doesn't have to be sad. It may have been Lalla's beautiful voice reading Gertrude's lines on the death of Ophelia. Or the story of Einstein's last words (for ever unknown because the nurse

understood no German). Or Hilaire Belloc's "To the Balliol men still in Africa". Trite but... see what I mean about being soppy?

Would it be true to say that you have a rather shallow understanding of religion?
Kevin O'Donnell, Crowthorne
I doubt that religion can survive deep understanding. The shallows are its natural habitat. The Bible as literature should be a compulsory part of the national curriculum – you can't understand English literature and culture without it. Meanwhile, we should devote as much time to studying serious theology as we devote to studying serious fairies and serious unicorns.

You seem so cynical about human life – how can you bear to get up in the mornings?
Sara Moore, Aston
Unweaving the Rainbow opens with this very question. And I quote from later in the book:

"After sleeping through a hundred million centuries, we have finally opened our eyes on a sumptuous planet, sparkling with colour, bountiful with life... Isn't it sad to go to your grave without ever wondering why you were born? Who, with such a thought, would not spring from bed, eager to resume discovering the world and rejoicing to be part of it?"

Your books completely changed the way I see the world: what do you think the major effect of *The Blind Watchmaker* or *The Selfish Gene* has been?
Barry Shamplin, Ilford
I am happy, and a bit humbled, to tell you that quite a lot of readers have said something similar.

You are very emotional on the subject of religion. Did you suffer from religion in your childhood?
Joan Modin, East Dulwich
The answer to your rather patronising question is no, I had a liberal upbringing and was never op-

pressed by religion. Just as anybody who writes exceptionally clearly is damned as "simplistic", it is often assumed that anybody who feels exceptionally strongly about something must therefore be emotional or irrational, fanatical or traumatised in childhood.

What is your favourite way of relaxing?
Louisa Dillon, Primrose Hill
In human intercourse.

You've got such a reputation for being clever; are people intimidated by you?
Ian Osborne, Edinburgh
Obviously I hope not. If my hopes are wrong, I am nonplussed, even hurt. I don't think anybody who really knows me thinks I am intimidating. And I'm not particularly clever, perhaps just clear. I suspect that some people find clarity intimidating.

What would you most like to be remembered for?
Julia Norris, Salford
In the words of Hilaire Belloc: "When I am gone, I hope it may be said: His sins were scarlet, but his books were red."

Would you describe yourself as selfish?
Simon Eldon, St Neots
In less happy times, a publication once asked me to compose my own epitaph, and because it was a charitable publication I obliged. "Others lived beyond his means: a giver, not a taker. He was less selfish than his genes; more blind than his watchmaker."

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

IN TWO WEEKS' TIME: DJ JOHN PEEL, THEN DAYTIME TV PRESENTERS RICHARD AND JUDY

Send questions to DJ John Peel, and TV husband-and-wife team Richard Madeley and Judy Finnegan to: You Ask The Questions, Features, *The Independent*, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London. E14 5DL (fax 0171-293 2182; e-mail yourquestions@independent.co.uk) by noon on Thursday, 31 December



THE IRRITATIONS OF MODERN LIFE

20: ROUND ROBIN LETTERS BY ROSS CLARK

IT'S THAT time of year again: when the round robins come bob, bobbin' through your letterbox. By Christmas Eve you'll know all about Martha's hip operation, will have heard about Olive and Louise's trip to Hawaii, and will know why poor Elmer can't be with the family this Christmas.

Round robins always pose the same question: who the hell are all these people? You probably haven't seen the sender for several years, let alone their friends and acquaintances. You're never going to meet them, either, because one of the main objects of a round robin letter is to describe, in luxuriant detail, all the family feasts that Derek and Sheila couldn't quite find room to invite you to. "The party to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary in July was blessed with

golden sunshine..." Hey, what party, you hear yourself saying. How come I wasn't asked?

It is only in the last five years that the round robin letter has taken off here. Before that, the only one you got was from that nice couple from Alabama you once met in a B&B in Salcombe. When their round robin arrived you read it out loud and had a good giggle. Ah, well, you said, those Americans! But it's not just Americans any more. It's Dick and Vera from Carshalton, Reg and Marigold from Ipswich.

But what is the point of a people as reticent as the English trying to give their news on a photocopied sheet of A4? If something genuinely interesting has happened in the last 12 months, they're not going to tell you about it. They never say: "In May, Dick had a brief fling with his



No round robins please, we're British Gary Doak

secretary. Vera's first instinct was to seek a divorce and screw him for every penny, but now they're trying to patch things up for the sake of the children. "You never get one admitting: 'Ryan's been terribly troubled by his acne this year. We think it was the anxiety that led to his being pulled up for

shoplifting in WH Smith's in Basingstoke, but it's all behind him now and the new cream is working well."

No, all you get is a commentary of the weather at family events: showers at Brian and Julia's wedding, five degrees of frost at great-aunt Bertha's funeral. What a blissful age it was before the word processor was invented, when your fourth cousin three times removed couldn't run off 100 identical letters at the press of a button.

Technology can't be un-invented, but there is one tactic you can use to defend yourself: just send a card back and write: "What a splendid idea to send your Christmas greetings in a chain letter. I think we did what we were supposed to do: we sent photocopies to 10 people picked at random from the phone book. Good luck to you too in '99." That should stop them.

'Suspect on his way to Santa's Grotto'

Retailers may complain about recession on the high street this Christmas, but there's still one business that's booming: shoplifting. By Emma Cook

ADRIAN STANDS motionless behind a display of men's underpants, staring fixedly at an elderly gentleman fishing through a rack of socks. He looks innocent enough, but within minutes he's been singled out from the swarm of last-minute Christmas shoppers in Selfridges on Oxford Street. "You get a second sense about people," says Adrian, darting from behind his Calvin Klein camouflage to another vantage point – a potted palm beside one of Selfridges' grand white pillars. "Sometimes you can't pretend to be a shopper; you have to find a spot to get a really close view of the suspect," he explains.

It's hardly the high drama of Cops, but Adrian Pannett, 38, Selfridges' chief store detective, has his moments. A high-speed chase through women's separates, perhaps, even a scuffle in Santa's Grotto. Recently, a woman stuffed so much merchandise down her leggings, they ended up around her ankles when she tried to sprint down Oxford Street. Another woman embarrassed Adrian acutely by shouting "Rape!" as he chased her out through the door. And there was the man who tried to leg it with a solitary diamond worth £7,000. When Adrian collared him in the perfume department, he threw it high in the air, shouting "This one's on me, darling".

Two days before Christmas, the season of reckless criminal activity has reached its zenith. Peace and good will don't extend to crime, which flourishes from the end of November until the end of the New Year sales – shoplifting offences rise by 10 per cent. A retail crime survey carried out by the British Retail Consortium says there's been a huge increase in theft in the last year – it is up by 42 per cent, costing shops nearly £47m. Shoplifting last year cost £1.83bn, including crime prevention measures.

Last year, Asda lost £1.3m to theft. It adopted a "zero tolerance" policy, now adopted by other stores, whereby shoplifters face a bill for compensation, paying around £130 per



He's behind you: Adrian Pannett on duty in Selfridges

Kalpesh Lathigra

offence to cover legal fees.

Most shops are gearing up for a grimmer festive period than usual, after a year dogged by threats of a world-wide recession. Even in Selfridges, the crowds seem thinner than usual. Pannett has caught 30 per cent more shoplifters this Christmas than last – though it's hard to know whether financial gloom has tempted more ingenuities, or surveillance has improved. Selfridges has invested in 160 state-of-the-art security cameras and has 12 store detectives on the shop floor.

In the hi-tech security centre, lined with television screens, Adrian, who used to work in the Marines, shows me a "Best of..." video: a series of fumbling opportunists caught on camera. In some cases their sheer gall is impressive: people who stalk out of the food hall with a frozen turkey pushed down their trousers, or pile 20 designer jumpers inside a coat. You almost pick the nervous ones, looking like frightened rabbits as they pick up clothes or books, shaking, looking around, then putting them

back. "They're the ones who've been hit by adrenalin," says Adrian. "They can't see anything. Their heart's racing. You can tell it's getting to them." Once they're caught, Adrian takes them to a holding-room until the police arrive. It sounds pretty grim: cameras, no door handle on the inside and no windows. Adrian says: "Sometimes we do close the door on them – we've had people who pull out knives, syringes."

After 18 years Adrian has a pretty good idea of the dominant categories that "lifters", as he calls them, can fall into. A noticeboard behind him is covered with details of what he calls your classic Prolific Lifter – someone who steals for a living, sells merchandise on, often has to support a hefty drug habit and has been prosecuted several times. There's also the Opportunist Lifter – anyone from a housewife to a businessman; and the Label Lifter – out for a specific fashion item. And there's the Emotional Lifter, who steals because they're clinically depressed or distressed. These Adrian says

he doesn't much enjoy catching. He talks about the time he caught a young woman stealing some clothes. She was suffering from post-natal depression. "It was the worst job I've ever done – I didn't want to give evidence against her," he says. As a father himself, he sympathises with parents who are distraught to discover that their teenager has been caught swiping a Nike sweatshirt or a Mac lipstick. "Sometimes you just think, 'There but for the grace of God go I'."

He tilts his head and listens to a tiny radio earphone. "Suspect in Santa's Grotto. Blue coat and hat. Heading away from the toy department." He races up the escalators and fights his way through a crowd of children. Too late, the suspect has disappeared. "He was off his head. Drugs or drink," says a security guard.

Still, Adrian's had his piece of action for the day. "It can be boring when there's nothing happening," he says. "I love it when it's busy. There's a message in your earphone. You get that adrenalin buzz..."

CLASSIFIED

Legal Notices

ARTHRELL, Cyril William Alexandra Arthrell, otherwise Cyril William Arthrell, late of Hico, Rochester, Kent, died there on 18 July 1998. (Estate about £30,000).
BING, nee DANN, Joan Elsie Bing nee Dann, Widow, late of Cullington, Kent, died there on 15 April 1998. (Estate about £1,000).
BOWDEN, formerly Collingwood nee Bland, Dorothy Bowden formerly Collingwood nee Bland, Widow, late of Loughborough, Leicestershire, died there on 29 April 1997. (Estate about £2,000).
BUTLER, Donald Graham Butler, late of Hove, East Sussex, died at Brighton, East Sussex on 4 November 1996. (Estate about £35,000).
CLARKE, Raymond Thomas Clarke otherwise Raymond Clarke, late of Brighton, London SW2, died at Lambeth, London SE1 on 25 April 1997. (Estate about £10,000).
DEAMER, John Thomas Sherwood Deamer, late of Northampton, Northamptonshire, died there on 21 November 1997. (Estate about £5,500).
FOSTER, Frederick Foster, otherwise: Frederick Thomas Foster, late of Southsea, Hampshire, died at Gosport, Hampshire on 13 July 1998. (Estate about £20,500).
OSBORNE, Edgar Ronald Osborne, late of Walsall, West Midlands, died there on 7 January 1998. (Estate about £15,000).
REPSE, Joris Repse, late of Westminster, London SW1, died there on 10 June 1992. (Estate about £5,000).
STORK, Samuel Stark, late of Sheffield, South Yorkshire, died there on 17 February 1998. (Estate about £30,000).
SZAFRAN, Bronislaw Szafraan, otherwise Bruno Szafraan, late of Ilford, Essex, died there on 22 September 1996. (Estate about £30,000).
TEMBLETT, Evelyn Temblett, Spinster, late of Bristol, Avon, died there on 29 June 1998. (Estate about £10,000).
WILLIAMS, Thomas Williams, late of Sherburn Hill, Durham, died there on 18 October 1998. (Estate about £85,000).
The Widow/Widower and Kin of the above named are requested to apply to the Treasury Solicitor (B.V.), Queen Anne's Chambers, 28 Broadwing London SW1H 9LS, failing which the Treasury Solicitor may take steps to administer the estate.

The Insolvency Act 1986
HOUSE OF IRMA LIMITED
(in Liquidation)
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Maurice Raymond Dorrington RFA of Poppleton & Appleby, 4 Chancery Square, London, EC1A 3BN was appointed Liquidator of the said Company by the creditors on 17th December 1998.
M.R. DORRINGTON, Liquidator

No. 006755 of 1998
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
CHANCERY DIVISION
COMPANIES COURT
IN THE MATTER OF
ROLLS-ROYCE & PARTNERS FINANCE LIMITED

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 1985
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Order of the High Court of Justice (Chancery Division) dated 12 December 1998 confirming the reduction of the capital of the above-named Company from US\$ 300,000,000 to US\$44,457,610 and the Minute approved by the High Court showing with respect to the capital of the Company as altered the several particulars required by the above-mentioned Act were registered by the Registrar of Companies on 17 December 1998.
Dated: 18 December 1998
Messrs Freshfields 65 Fleet Street London EC4Y 1HS Ref: CBN7B
Solicitors for the above-named Company

In the Matter of
CATERING EQUIPMENT WAREHOUSES LTD
and in the Matter of the Insolvency Act 1986
Registered number: 278921
Notice of business. Supply and repair of new and used Catering Equipment.
Trade classification: 45
Administrative order made: 30.11.1998
CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL JACQUES and MICHAEL HERBERT HARTON Administrators(s)

Legal Notices

In the Matter of
CATERNET CENTRES LTD
And in the Matter of the Insolvency Act 1986
Registered number: 2569339
Notice of business. Supply and repair of new and used Catering Equipment.
Trade classification: 45
Administrative order made: 30.11.1998
CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL JACQUES and MICHAEL HERBERT HARTON Administrators(s)

The Insolvency Act 1986
CONTURA LANDSCAPES LIMITED
(in Liquidation)
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He's a star, and he's no dummy

The man who makes the shoppers stop and stare on New York's Fifth Avenue started out on the other side of the glass – with his nose pressed up against the windows of John Lewis. There's fame in store for Simon Doonan, says Tamsin Blanchard



Above, one of Simon Doonan's window displays for Barneys, Christmas 1998. Below, Doonan, currently appearing behind plate glass and soon to be immortalised on film in 'Confessions of a Window Dresser'

A Hollywood movie about a window dresser? Have you ever heard of anything so ridiculous? Well, *Confessions of a Window Dresser*, based on the life of one of fashion's campiest and most influential figures, may break box office records after all. (Warren Beatty did it for hairdressers in *Shampoo*.) And Simon Doonan, the window dresser in question, is no ordinary display person. At the November launch of his book, *Confessions of a Window Dresser*, to be published here next year, Doonan, the 47-year-old British ex-pat and creative director of New York's chic store, Barneys, was mobbed. All New York was there, including an Yves Saint Laurent lookalike. If Yves could have been there in person, no doubt he would have been.

Simon Doonan knows everyone, and everyone knows him. Even those who don't know him know of his windows. And Christmas is the time when his creative juices overflow on to the sidewalks of Madison Avenue. New Yorkers make a point of going to Barneys to see the Christmas windows, just as Doonan himself used to stand and gawk at the displays at his local John Lewis in Reading as a boy. While those windows usually involved lengths of gold lamé and velvet, draped artfully around a mannequin, Doonan's efforts are an altogether more splendid affair. He caused controversy when he put Magic Johnson alongside a Christmas tree dripping with gold condoms ("it was all very tasteful," says Doonan); he dressed Madonna as the Virgin Mary and Margaret Thatcher as a dominatrix

in bondage. He makes a point of creating secular windows every year, and at a time when American sentimentality is in overdrive, Doonan's windows are as dark and spooky as a Tim Burton Halloween. He has a penchant for coffins in his displays – he says they guarantee interest. As you might expect, he brushes off the odd complaint (and a few death threats) without a care. Iain R. Webb, fashion director of *British Elle*, is a fan. "He's one of those people who doesn't mind taking risks," says Webb. "It's his British eccentricity that the Americans adore, because they haven't got that themselves. He's much more about selling an idea than selling a product. He understands the power of iconography." Doonan also has his finger on the pulse: his windows are invariably predictions of trends to come. This



Christmas, he has gone for scenes of debauchery and decadence with a hallucinogenic 1930s Cabaret theme – light fixtures made of hair, an 8ft-tall saxophone of papier mâché being played by a naked, marabou feather-draped Nadja Auermann mannequin, oversized Martini glasses and olives, lampshades made of tick-tacks, and a beaded curtain made of Reese's

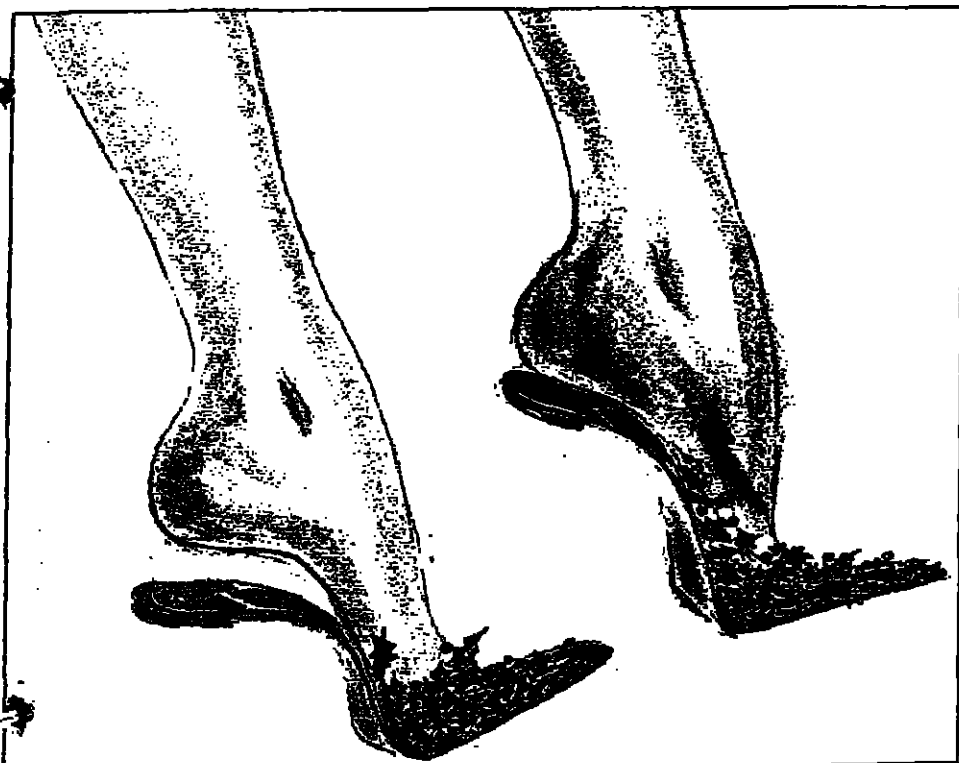
peanut butter cups. "The windows reflect the slightly decadent tinge New York has," says Doonan, in his more-English-than-the-Queen's-English drawl. He is after all, the Oscar Wilde of window dressing. "My updated Cabaret compares the New York of the Nineties with the Berlin of the Thirties. The self-indulgence and glamour of New York is all there." His windows break all the rules. "I like to include lots of detritus and dirt," he says. If he could get away with it, he'd quite like to have no clothes at all in the windows. Strangely enough, Simon Doonan, who is known affectionately as "Mummy" to those who work for him, began his rise to fashion fabulousness working at Heelas of Reading, his local branch of John Lewis. In the early Seventies, he escaped to London to reinvent himself as a glam-rockier in glitter and jumble-

sale finds. He found a job working at Yves Saint Laurent for £18 a week, moved on to the windows at Aquascutum and ended up at Tommy Nutter in Savile Row, where he quickly found his forte for making windows that would stop people in their tracks. "I did rats with rhinestones," says Doonan. "The more theatrical and nutty, the better." His nutty ideas soon landed him a job in L.A. and in 1976 he went to work for the designer store Maxfield. From there, he found himself in New York's Metropolitan Museum Costume Institute, working as display designer with the mother of all fashion legends, Diana Vreeland. In the 1980s, Doonan was offered the plum job: window dresser at Barneys. Since then, he has risen to creative director and a six-figure salary (rumoured to be more than half a million dollars) and is as much an

institution as the store itself. His first Christmas windows portrayed a deserted, decaying palace with mice scurrying amid the merchandise. In 1994, he portrayed the Baby Jesus using a Japanese Hello Kitty doll. The public was not amused and the window was withdrawn. Since then, he has avoided religious themes. At times, Doonan displays a *Monty Python*-style humour that is peculiarly British, and that most New Yorkers are not quite tuned in to. Movie-goers, however, will find his sense of fun and irony as entertaining as his windows. Hollywood is said to be fighting over the rights to Doonan's book, with Rupert Everett (who else?) tipped for the starring role. "You'd have to saw off his legs first," says Iain R. Webb (Doonan is an elfin elf). But Simon Doonan has enough front to carry off the role himself.

It's time to come to the aid of the party frock

You've spent a small fortune on a pair of must-have spindly sandals and a fabulous beaded cocktail dress – so why be a Scrooge when it comes to caring for them? By Sojourner Jones



Jeeves of Belgravia will re-sole your Manolo Blahnik shoes

WHITE IS this year's chic winter shade, and luxury fabrics are key, but who can you trust when it comes to laundering that £800 Ralph Lauren silk shirt to ensure it keeps its celestial brightness? Or come to that, repair your beloved handbag, mend those adored strappy sandals or make sure your soft leather jacket doesn't return from the cleaners looking like a prune? "When you're giving someone your favourite, not to mention most expensive, item of clothing you want to know they'll be treated with respect," explained Peter Sidell of The Library. "That's why for the past 10 years I've used the Howard Stone Valet Services. I know I can give Howard an expensive suit or a prized cashmere sweater, and it will come back looking as good as new." "If something comes to us and we're not sure about it,"

says Howard Stone, "our philosophy is not to clean it before we've spoken to the customer. Saying that, we rarely turn anything away. We've experienced in cleaning everything from hand-beaded dresses by Gucci to ties from Marks & Spencer, so we're not afraid of the odd stain." Another complete valet service is offered by Jeeves of Belgravia. "We clean and repair virtually any fashion item. We'll also make sure your Manolo Blahniks are resoled to exactly match the shoe, or re-fashion a heel to bring it a little more up to date. We can also repair the linings, clasps and zips on most handbags." Rejuvenation needn't cost the earth. Jeeves will completely clean and attend to minor repairs on a bespoke suit for under £20. If you really want to ensure your favourite items retain their good looks,

Jeeves and Stone offer a few invaluable tips. Remember to brush overcoats – it keeps the pile up and removes damaging surface dirt. Help shoes keep their shape by stuffing them with tissue paper; polish leather regularly or it will lose its moisture and crack; try not to wear the same pair of shoes every day, as the inside needs time to dry naturally. Always cover your favourite items with cloth bags, not plastic – that way they can breathe. And of course, never put anything away for the winter without giving it a good clean. If there is one thing moths love more than a woollen sweater, it's a dirty woollen sweater. Howard Stone Valet Services A full and comprehensive dry cleaning and repair service. Can also see to heels that have fallen off and re-stitch bags. Free delivery and collection

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Where angels fear to tread

The Royal Opera and Ballet companies at last have a properly qualified and experienced Executive Director.
Can Michael Kaiser turn the tide? By David Lister

I do miss my spectator sports," says the new man in charge in his Manhattan drawl. "I've learned the rules of rugby. But no one can explain to me the rules of cricket." It's easy. A man comes out just after his predecessor has been ignominiously given little choice but to walk. His strengths and weaknesses are then exposed for all to see. And people on all sides are trying to force him out too. It's just like running the Royal Opera House.

But then Michael Kaiser has already experienced the vicissitudes of Covent Garden. As he arrives, the Royal Ballet threatens to jump ship. A month later his grant is increased from £14m to £20m by the Arts Council.

It has been rumoured abroad that the new executive director, a former management consultant, is a tough operator. Indeed, the *Chicago Tribune* called him "the turnaround king". Turnaround involves going into ailing companies, identifying problems and swiftly rectifying morale, balance sheets and reputation. He did this at New York's American Ballet Theatre, among other arts companies, after working at IBM and General Motors. Unexpectedly, however, he's no gum-chewing, no-nonsense, Wall Street whiz-kid.

Yes, the 45-year-old, softly-spoken troubleshooter had plenty to say about turnaround, Covent Garden-style. Yes, he had a tried and trusted formula for delivering the goods the Arts Council had demanded when they had given the ROH a massive grant uplift the day before I met him. But he also talked, a little coyly, about how he was a trained opera singer (a baritone), loved choral music (and wanted to bring more to Covent Garden), and had golden memories of taking part in Berlioz's *Requiem* under Sir Colin Davis with the Boston Philharmonic at Tanglewood. He even tried the fiddle "but was just awful". He had to - his grandfather played violin in the New York Philharmonic for 40 years.

But Michael Kaiser's passion is for Gilbert and Sullivan. His favourite role in his amateur singing

days was Sir Despard in *Ruddigore*, a fact he wisely kept hidden until after the grant increase was announced. Had it been known a month ago, it would have been too much for headline writers to resist.

The increase means he can afford to be expensive. He can even afford to have a smile playing on his round, owl-like face, as he sits in his Floral Street office opposite the House. That makes him the first director to be seen smiling since, well, at least three directors ago. So can we take it that all the problems that have entertained and disgusted politicians and public alike are now over? "Yes, it's a great day for us. The problems are solved with the grant. It allows us to focus on the future."

So we will never again hear the

'The problem at the ROH wasn't a lack of cash. It was people looking at the past and not the future'

perennial cry that you are underfunded? "You will never hear it from me." He even goes on to say that the ROH's problem "was not a short term lack of cash at all". This man knows what a cash shortage really means. "At American Ballet Theatre, we literally had to turn off every other light bulb. We ran out of point shoes. That's not been the case here. I do turnarounds for a living, and one of the common traits is that people are looking backwards, pointing fingers, blaming each other, and not looking to the future."

"What's needed here is a turnaround in people's expectations of the institution. How do we rebuild the trust of the public, the government and the donors? I'm working on the answers to all."

He has already achieved one short-term objective by persuading the music director, Bernard Haitink, to stay. Kaiser, who likes as much art and as little administration as possible, has also insisted that the new

studio theatre be open to the public (incredibly, chairman Sir Colin Southgate was going to keep it dark for lack of money). "Imagine," enthuses Kaiser, "the lecture demonstrations we can have... free lunchtime concerts once a week..."

Kaiser disagrees with Richard Eyre's report which said that access was a cost of subsidy. "It's not a cost. It's my mission. I want people to come to opera and ballet. I want more children to come." He is committed to reducing seat prices. He will also bring in better PR - "a much more pro-active press policy" - turning dialogue "away from blame to what's going to happen in the future... for example, we're building this wonderful new facility but there has been so much fear that people had stopped dreaming about this new facility. I walk around the building talking about programming. You read about bad management and bad staff here. The truth is people were working extremely hard, but each department was working on its own. You start by bringing people into a room together and letting them talk. And I'm linking marketing and fundraising together. You fundraise after a marketing blitz. I pioneered that in America."

Corporate donors and individuals, he stresses, need to see they will get something for their money. "We have to recognise that." He is, however, quick to reassure British sensibilities on the matter. "One American ballet company had a toy firm sponsor and put its mascot moose into the third act of *Nutcracker*. That's the wrong way. At ABT we had Ernst and Young sponsoring our website. When you logged on you could also click on to Ernst & Young and find out more about them. That's a good example."

In the case of individuals, he has ideas such as the artistic director giving lectures previewing forthcoming seasons. "The ROH has 15,000 Friends, all giving £45 a year. Now, some could give more and get other privileges in return, but they haven't been asked, and we haven't created what we call in America 'a ladder of giving'."



Will we again hear that the house is underfunded? Michael Kaiser: 'You will never hear it from me'

Talking of ladders, the ROH chairman said not once but twice at a press conference earlier this year that the house would be "artist-led": an artistic director would be in charge. Will Kaiser soon be playing second fiddle?

"No. An artistic director will be appointed. But we will be dead equal." But Sir Colin did say originally... "We will be dead equal," Kaiser interjects politely, but firmly. "It will be shared, if you will." One

of the candidates who was approached, Sarah Billingham of New York's Metropolitan Opera, refused to come under a "dead equal" set-up. Kaiser says, chivalrously, that she is "a wonderful person and very knowledgeable", then adds a little less chivalrously, "but I doubt if there were 10 people in London who had heard of her before this all came up".

And whoever is in charge will still have a Royal Ballet company.

Kaiser is again polite, but a wee bit devastating when confirming that there were moves by the company to go it alone, away from Covent Garden. After praising the dancers, he adds: "The ballet dancers were very unhappy. They had a notion that they could form their own company. They were only looking at their own salaries. They forgot that there were other overheads to consider."

Kaiser has said that he lives

alone, and that the hardest thing about leaving New York was having to leave his dog behind. In his spare moments, he has his head in the English classics. He is re-reading *Pride and Prejudice* and reading *Middlemarch* "for the first time, I'm ashamed to say". But only when the companies aren't performing. "I attend virtually every performance," he says. "It's important that the artists see me around - and, of course, it's a joy for me."

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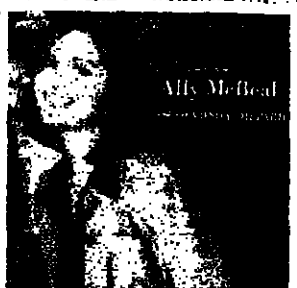
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MEGASTORES

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Spellbound at the frontier

THE SET-UP on the stage is part Mission Control, part Heath Robinson. High-tech work stations full of futuristic gizmos loom over what look like random collections of junk salvaged from a ship, and the Dexon shelving for the percussionist Paul Lytton's DIY rack of things to beat, shake, rattle and roll, has an egg whisk sticking out of the side. There's no kitchen sink - just everything but. In one of Barry Guy's extraordinarily kinetic double-bass solos, a cooking pan lid is slid between the strings for textural effect. And in free improvisation - a form of music in which Lytton, Guy, the violinist Philipp Wachsmann and the saxophonist Evan Parker are world leaders - texture is almost all.

Since the movement began in the Sixties, inspired by both free jazz and the experiments of the contemporary classical avant garde, free improvisers have been burrowing about in the innards of their instruments, or employing them in unusual ways, in order to bring

JAZZ

EVAN PARKER
ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC
ENSEMBLE
ARNOLFINI
BRISTOL



Evan Parker: shifting patterns David Sinclair

forth fresh sounds. The use of various types of electronic gadgetry to further distress and extend the sonic range has also been going since the beginning of the movement. But now they really have the technology to do it properly. This, the last date of a short UK tour by this ensemble, was the proof of the pudding.

While the four conventional instruments play, either solo or together, their contributions are simultaneously reconfigured by the real-time tweaking of three electronic sound processors (the Mission Control men: Walter Prati, Marco Vecchi and Lawrence Casserley, with Wachsmann switching between the two roles). The sound is mixed for an all-round speaker

least partially "composed", was also arranged with great care so that not all the Ensemble's eggs were put into the one basket, and each member introduced another member of the group until, by the end, they were all involved.

Although everything was interesting, the highlights were Guy's first bass solo (the pan lid one), which was almost indescribably rich and diverting, and the relatively late entry of Parker himself. Parker's soprano saxophone technique, which, through circular breathing, manages to create constantly shifting patterns that at times recall muezins at prayer, or the exotic wheedling of North African pan-pipes, was, with the addition of the electronic effects, almost literally spell-binding.

At the end, after an hour and a half, you had had enough, but the evening provided a complete vindication of this often abused music's power and contemporary relevance.

PHIL JOHNSON

The century, by numbers

KATHRYN STOTT must have had fun planning her 40th-birthday piano recital at the Wigmore Hall on Saturday. She chose a piece, or group of pieces, to represent each decade of the century, beginning with Ravel and ending with Graham Fitkin.

Stott is one of the busiest pianists around, both as a soloist and chamber musician - she gave two Wigmore recitals with colleagues earlier this month and has recently formed a Tango trio called Tango Tiempo. Far from making Saturday evening into a fussy gala, she just got on with the job, dressed for comfort in trousers and a plain sleeveless top, and played from music.

Which created no barrier nor feeling that she was underprepared, as her firm yet melting projection of Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* immediately made clear.

CLASSICAL

KATHRYN STOTT
WIGMORE HALL
LONDON

She was equally fluent in Faure's 12th *Nocturne*, whose disquieting harmonies and unexpected continuity unfolded without strain, warmly natural.

The Twenties were represented by Gershwin's three Preludes, and the Thirties by Rachmaninov's *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, his last solo piano work, which was expertly shaped by Stott.

So far, all the composers were ones with whom she has become particularly identified. She has a certain objectivity and a strong rhythmic impulse, both of which suit music marrying the popular with a sense of history. Taking slight chronological licence, her choice for

the Forties was *Bachianas Brasileiras* No.4, by Villa-Lobos, which moulds Brazilian folklore in Baroque forms.

You might just suspect Shostakovich of doing something similar in the last of his 24 Preludes and Fugues of 1951, because it sounds as if an attempt to remember the tune of "On Ilkley Moor" gets lost in dour academic counterpoint.

The Sixties and Seventies also seemed years of austerity. In this programme, though Stott was as gentle and considerate as she could be with Peter Maxwell Davies' *Five Little Pieces*. After these post-war miniatures, Aaron Copland's *Night Thoughts*, written for the 1973 Van Cliburn Piano Competition, seemed even more dyspeptic until its final velvety chords unrolled in some sort of gesture of conciliation. As Copland's last piano work,

it seems strangely negative.

Its lack of rhythmic interest was made good with Astor Piazzolla's *Three Preludes*, though the first rambles freely, like an introduction to the others. In these, as in so much of what he did, Piazzolla had problems with endings. Endings in music which don't conceal their origins in improvisation tend to be arbitrary anyway.

But Graham Fitkin's *Relent* (as in "relentless", I assume) was obviously pitched at an effective conclusion. Essentially, it's a toccata, and a showpiece for Stott's strong technique. I liked a passage with the right hand vigorously pounding across the left, and the opening was striking. The composer's programme note talked about time, and marking time, but doing it sometimes made for less than gripping listening.

ADRIAN JACK

Cheap insurance for a previous generation, 'penny policies' have matured well - but few people realise it. By Teresa Hunter

Pennies that can add up to pounds



'Penny' insurance policies were originally taken out to enable people to pay for their funerals

Insurance payouts on thousands of "penny" insurance policies may have to be recalculated after an investigation by *The Independent* which shows that policyholders are receiving incorrect surrender values.

Up to 40 million "penny policies", some dating back more than 100 years, are lying forgotten in Britain's homes, their owners unaware of the substantial value they carry. Due to a computer software problem, one company, Liverpool Victoria, is reassessing its payouts.

"Penny policies" were a type of insurance policy taken out to cover a person's funeral costs, and they

were extremely popular until the Sixties. Valuing them, though, is not easy. Although they were basic life insurance contracts, payable on death to cover funeral expenses, most companies added annual bonuses, even when they were not strictly "with-profits" policies.

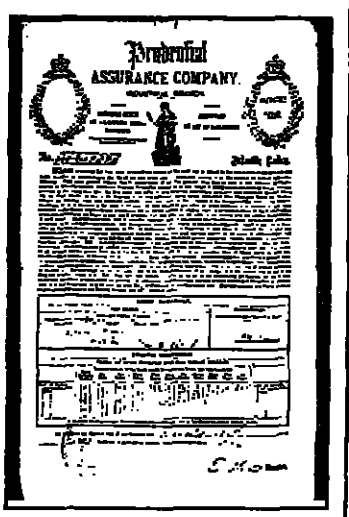
One policyholder, Duncan Martin, from Bristol, saw the value of his 58-year-old penny policy, bought by his mother from the Liverpool Victoria on his birth, treble in two years. Mr Martin says: "I knew that these values couldn't be right. My main concern was how many other people were receiving strange quotations, but were doing nothing about them."

Mr Martin's suspicions were first raised by the wide gap between surrender values issued by Liverpool Victoria, and others from the Prudential on very similar policies. His mother had paid two old pennies weekly to the Pru since his birth in 1940, and one penny to the Liverpool Victoria. She began a second weekly policy with Liverpool Victoria for two pennies more when he was 10.

In 1996, Mr Martin decided to surrender the contracts and received a surrender value from the Pru of £503.73. However, the Liverpool Victoria policy, taken out at the same time for admittedly half the premium, was worth only £55 and the second contract was valued at £75.

Policy pitfalls to avoid

- Keep a list of all your insurance policies (such as the Prudential policy pictured here) and their value and let your family know where they are.
- If you find some old strange-looking documents, always contact the company and ask for a valuation - no matter how unlikely that looks. You might be pleasantly surprised.
- If the valuation seems wrong, query it with the company. Ask for a detailed explanation of how it was calculated.
- Always keep paying premiums no matter how small. Failure to do so terminates the contract, and its value will be sharply eroded.



He took the money from the Pru, but kept the others going. When he inquired again recently about the Liverpool Victoria policies, the value of the first had all but trebled to £146, while the second had grown to £184.

"I was baffled," Mr Martin says. "How can policies taken out at the same time produce such widely diverse sums? And how can their value treble in such a short time?"

The Liverpool Victoria says the problem arose from a computer problem. Ian Blanchard, the company's group actuary, says he will take immediate action once the IT firm that provides the computer software has reported back on the nature and scale of the problem.

He says: "Right now, we do not know whether these are isolated blips affecting only particular kinds of policies, like the penny policies, or whether the problem is more widespread. Potentially large numbers of quotations could be hit. We will write to policyholders if necessary and re-calculate values where appropriate. Mr Martin received

too much and we won't be asking him for the money back. However, it's possible others may have received too little."

The Financial Services Authority, the new financial watchdog, says it would be concerned if any company were found to be issuing false quotes, whether too high or too low.

A spokesman says: "Companies are obliged by conduct of business rules to supply quotations which are accurate. You can't have companies paying out the wrong amounts to their policyholders."

"Penny policies" are part of the history of British insurance, but many millions could still be paid out. The Prudential is trying to trace 625,000 owners of contracts worth £34m which have matured. The Pru believes thousands more payouts have gone unclaimed on deaths, because younger generations think these penny policies are worthless.

Recently, Pearl, another insurer, received a claim on a policy begun

in 1893, insuring the life of a woman who died 30 years ago. The sum assured was only one pound and 15 old shillings, but with bonuses the beneficiaries will receive much more. The policy came to light when her granddaughter was sifting through some old papers of her mother's, the policyholder's daughter, who had

"Because the premium was so tiny, they often think they are worthless, when there can be quite significant values attached to them."

But the premiums were not small in the days when they were paid. Pru marketing manager, Norman Turner, says: "If you had a dozen children, it could be a real struggle to pay

has had such an astronomic impact on their returns. If you add interest to interest over 40, 50, 60 years or more, these policies' value can soar."

Last month, the Pearl paid out nearly £700 on two policies taken out in 1896, following the death of a 104-year-old policyholder.

But thousands more go unpaid. The problems of keeping track were exacerbated when most of the insurers stopped collecting premiums, and contact with their policyholder was lost, especially if they moved house or were taken ill.

Door-to-door collection was the keystone to the success of these early insurance companies. Liverpool Victoria still collects its premiums, no matter how small, but the Pearl no longer offers a door-to-door service for premiums under £5. The company makes the payments then deducts them from any final maturity value, without adding interest. The Pru no longer collects premiums on policies over 40 years old.

The Prudential is trying to trace 625,000 owners of penny policy contracts worth £34m

herself died in 1991, unaware the contracts were valuable.

A Pearl spokesman says: "This is typical of many claims we receive today. Young people find these ancient-looking policy documents when their parents or grandparents die, and they don't know what they are, or what they could be worth."

these weekly premiums out of a wage of a couple of pounds a week. But the coins were taken out of the wage packet and put on the top of the mantelpiece, ready for when the collector called.

"These were not insignificant investments at the time, but it is the addition of compound interest which

The poor feared dissection

ONE OF the most socially divisive pieces of legislation ever to enter the statute book led to an explosion of sales of penny insurance policies in the second half of the last century.

Mass migration to the disease-ridden cities of Victorian England sent death rates soaring. One in five babies died before its first birthday, and at the turn of the century life expectancy in London was just 21.

But it was fear of dissection rather than of death which sent

sales of penny policies soaring. Before the 1832 Anatomy Act, hospitals were allowed only eight bodies a year for medical experimentation. A lucrative trade in body-snatching developed. The Anatomy Act sought to put an end to this trade by giving hospitals access to as many bodies as necessary for their work. But the corpses were the ones which no one could afford to bury.

To religious people, this

meant eternal damnation. But while labourers earned barely £1 a week in the late 19th century, the minimum cost of the cheapest funeral was £5. A man with 10 or 12 children could expect four out of five of them to die during childhood, yet he had no means of burying them. As late as 1938 in London, one in nine people to die received a pauper's funeral.

Insurance companies sprang up to meet this need. Liverpool Victoria was estab-

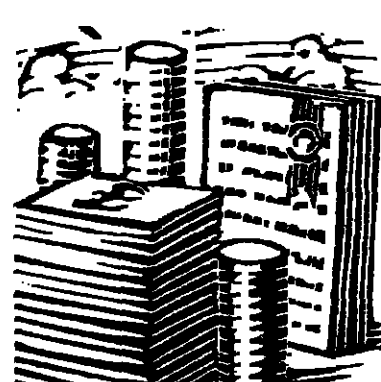
lished in 1842 to "afford the poorer classes the means of providing themselves and their children a decent interment for as little as a penny or three pence a week". The Pearl and Prudential quickly followed.

Insurers were not entirely motivated by profit. If someone stopped paying premiums because they had entered the workhouse, then the company paid for them and they were guaranteed a decent funeral.

TERESA HUNTER

I wouldn't recommend mango with the sprouts

CHESTNUTS ROASTING on an open fire, Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas" on the gramophone, smiling friends and family coming round to wish us good cheer - no, our Christmases aren't like that either. Perhaps you can only have them like that in black and white. Anyway, this year I can guarantee it'll be more like a Bruce Willis film, with snipers and shouting and the occasional explosion. The reason? We're spending the weekend with Uncle Edward and Aunt Julia.



THE TRADER

Uncle Edward is my father's big brother, who took early retirement from a small firm of solicitors about two years ago and has been driving everyone insane ever since. He still believes there's such a thing as a "steady job", for heaven's sake, and will no doubt lecture me on the subject over the festive spell, shortly before I decide to go for a very long stomp across the fields.

But Uncle E isn't the real problem: Aunt J is. To her, Christmas is a once-a-year chance to show off to the rest of us. Unlike my mother - who decided long ago that if God had meant her to spend her life in the kitchen He wouldn't have given us microwave ovens and chilled ready meals - Aunt J does everything herself. That means she'll have made the stuffing, the pastry and the filling for the mince pies, the pudding and all of the cake. She'll have agonised over which bird to have, which type of

smoked salmon, which vegetables. In short, she'll have worn herself to a frazzle, but in a very smug way.

As my father says, it wouldn't be so bad if she could actually cook. To be fair, what he means is that she tries too hard, so everything would be perfect if it weren't for that one extra ingredient: cherries in the mincemeat; lemon vodka in the pork and chestnut stuffing; and, one unforgettable year, mango with the Brussels sprouts. It means you can never quite relax and think, "Oooh yummy, roast potatoes."

Of course, it's always a bit of a struggle to get hold of your plate of booby-trapped food in the first place, as Aunt J has no intention of handing it over until you've realised in detail

exactly how much work went into the preparation. "I always find that the best thing..." starts up Aunt J, and I switch off. My mother's eyes glaze over as if she's calculating how soon she can claim to have a migraine, though if Aunt J carries on like this she'll have one for real soon enough.

"I expect you're used to lots of fancy restaurants in London," Aunt J always continues. "But I always think there's nothing quite like home cooking." I look at the plateful in front of me and realise that she's right about this, at least.

As you can imagine, all this less-than-gleeful anticipation of Christmas Day has rather dented my festive spirit. Not that it wasn't fragile to begin with. There was the horror of waking up after the team lunch with a man's watch on the bedside table, and it was only when my boyfriend Olivier rang to say he'd lost his that I calmed down. All the same, I still can't remember anything of the ride home except that Jaap climbed into the taxi after me - and people get up to all sorts of things in taxis. I can't exactly ask him about it, either.

And then we're sitting around the office when Rory asks Jaap why he's not wearing his new watch, and Jaap says he can't find it anywhere. "I was wearing it at the team lunch, but after that I can't remember having it." My heart stops. Olivier has lost his watch and so has Jaap. So the one on my bedside table - whose is it?

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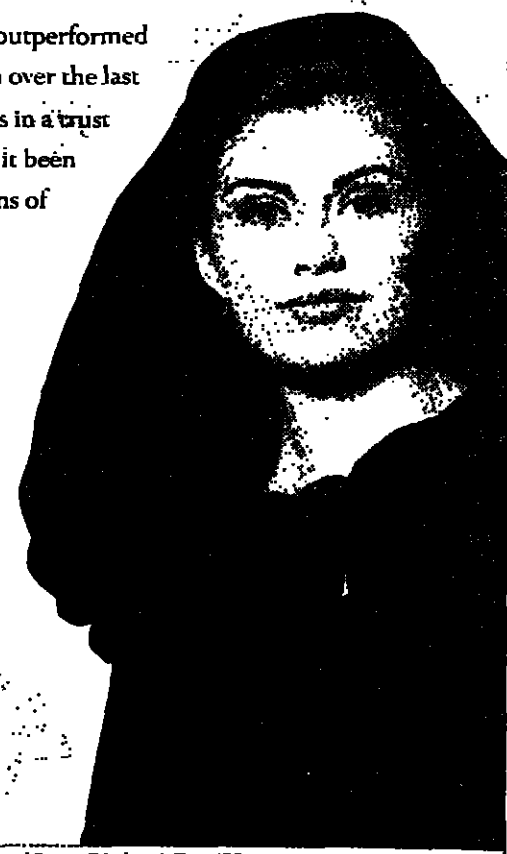
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I WORK FOR ...

AMANDA ROBINSON WORKS FOR ROBERT CREIGHTON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF GREAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN

There are many people happily working at Great Ormond Street who would run a mile from a normal hospital. I think one reason why no one finds this place sombre is because the place is brightly coloured and full of the sounds of children, and we also deliberately avoid giving the place that hospital smell by using a special type of disinfectant. But above all Great Ormond Street has a special, uplifting feeling to it which comes from knowing that the patients, many of whom are seriously ill, are receiving some of the best treatment they could possibly get. When I worked in the commercial sector I got very little sense of achievement from my job, but once here I realised that I wanted to stay and climb up the ladder, because I felt that my work was contributing to the care of children.

Christmas is our busiest time, but when the work gets too much I pop round to reception to see what's going on. Everything slides back into perspective when you see the children's faces light up with excitement at the sight of Father Christmas and two double-decker buses arriving to take them to see the Christmas lights. From my office I've also been able to see the kids dashing in and out of the boardroom where each ward holds its Christmas party, and there's plenty to get involved in at this time of year. We've already had the Christmas play given by the pupils of the hospital's school, and a carol service with mince pies and non-alcoholic mulled wine in our special chapel.

A lot of the children will go home for Christmas, but for those who have to stay in hospital we make sure that they have the best time they possibly can, by fitting their party around them. I've only recently



Robert spends every Christmas Day here with his wife and children

Mark Childers

realised that Robert, my boss, spends every Christmas Day here with his wife and two 10-year-old twin daughters - working here really helps you to realise what Christmas should be about.

With his jolly disposition and love of children, Robert is perfectly suited to his job. He is very keen that the patients' parents should be able to bring any worries or concerns they have direct to him, so he can look into the matter himself. Knowing the pain

that your own child is going through must be the worst kind of suffering. All our work is for the benefit of patient care, but it's not until you speak to the parents that you get an idea of how it feels to be at the receiving end of the services we provide. As a result, the contact I have with the parents is one of the things I most appreciate about my job.

I also spend a lot of my day arranging programmes for international visitors who come to us for

advice, and liaising with those who support and donate money to the hospital. But for the most part I work on keeping Robert in order, which I enjoy because he's calm, unflappable and easy to control. I'm highly organised myself and I find that it is much easier to sort things out if you don't panic. I was put on to our newsletter committee because I am in touch with all the departments and therefore know what's going on. For example, I always notify the editor

about any imminent VIP visit since we often have pop stars coming in to see the children.

The other day I accidentally knocked into one of Boyzone, when they came to open our haemophilia unit, which was rather embarrassing. But many personalities come on low-profile visits, as Diana, Princess of Wales often used to. Knowing that someone is visiting out of the good of their own head rather than for press attention makes you respect him or her all the more.

Charities also regularly send us puppet shows and clowns to make the kids laugh and we recently started inviting animals on to the wards, including a little leopard cub, because they were recognised as really good therapy for kids.

Since I know most of the staff through working in the Chief Executive's office, I have been invited to all the different departments' Christmas parties, most of which are on the same night. Robert will pop along to each of them, too, but I know that he will only stay for one drink because he's aware that while he's there everyone will be on their best behaviour and will hold back - he's really quite understanding in that respect. He also made sure to send a message to all his staff, via his usual column in the newsletter, to remind them to have a really good break this Christmas. I think that everyone

spends so much time at the office that the nature of both the boss and the workplace tends to affect the whole of your life, so it's a real bonus to be able to enjoy work as much as I do. I try not to go on about the hospital when I'm with my friends, but if they are interested I will always tell them of the latest fundraising film premiere or concert, and mention that we always need people on hand to shake collection tins.

INTERVIEW BY KATIE SAMPSON

Faking it...



THE TEMP

I'VE TRIED to blend in, in a little black dress and discreet jewellery, but it's hard in Hermes and diamonds when everyone else is in Hermes and discreet touches of real gold.

I don't really know what I'm doing here - no one has ever asked me to come to their Christmas party before, and it's not as if this is the first one I've organised. I've done a good job, if I say it myself. It's been fun having a budget of £200 a head - more than £30,000 to squander on a single party - though having only a week to arrange it was some headache.

But my unemployed artist mates have done wonders: Malachi's cardboard and gold spray-paint, and Rowena and Max's canvases of gondolas, bridges and naked statuary look fantastic, though I hope no one touches them with their Gucci dress. Furthermore, what with all the drink merchants sending me bottles of claret, bottles of Scotch and bottles of vodka in order to suck up, we've a houseful of cocktails for New Year, and enough test canapés in the freezer to feed everyone, as well.

Now, though proud, I'm bored. I don't know anyone. I keep trying to strike up conversations, with little success. I know why. These people introduce themselves with a CV: "Hello, I'm John Marshall of Crédit Suisse, just left Citibank." So the moment they cross-examine me, their eyes glaze. They say "The temp? Oh. How..." and drift away.

So this for a game of soldiers, I think, and tell the next person that I'm the designer who's doing out the offices next year; that I threw in this party as a freebie. He cheers up. "At last," he says, "someone who can talk about something other than the size of their bonus. I always wanted to be an artist myself. But you've got to live, haven't you? And I defy you to find anyone who can survive on less than £100,000 a year." "Oh, absolutely," I say enthusiastically. "You can't throw a decent party for less than twenty." "Or have a proper holiday. Do you know how much it cost when we went to an Aman resort?" "Funny you should mention them. I've just been doing one of their hotels in Borneo," I say. "Really? Borneo,

eh? Headhunters. Must be hard to get the staff." "No," I reply. "I just flew in a couple of dozen people from America." "Really? Hey, Jerry," he cries, "Come and meet..." "Amanda," I fill him in. "Amanda. Brilliant designer. Doing these people's offices next year." Jerry lurches over. "Thought you looked a bit arty for this crowd," he says. "Love the jewels. Very ironic." "Paste is the coming thing," I assure him. "Really? Must tell Susan. She'll be furious."

I'm surrounded by drunken men, regaling them with my stays at Arab villas in St Tropez and the difficulty of getting a Hollywood star to accept anything without frills. "You know what they say," I tell them. "You can take the girl out of the trailer park, but you can't take the trailer out of the girl." They laugh.

Sixteen glasses of champagne in, I'm having a high old time. Someone called Rolly suggests we get some caviare. Now, this is really living. We weave through the heaving Camillas, Rolly's hand firmly under my elbow. "Tell you what," he says into my ear. "How about we get out of here and try our chances at Titanic? You can tell me how to find someone to do a trompe-l'œil in my bathroom." Then we stop in front of Obsessive Graham.

"Graham old man!" he cries, as I try to wriggle into the background. "Meet Amanda! Lovely girl! Designer. Doing your offices out next year." Graham pauses, and for a moment I think he's going to cut me some Christmas slack. Not a chance. "No she isn't," he says, as Rolly's face drops. "She's our temp secretary. And she's leaving tomorrow."

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For application forms please call 01203 228952 and quote relevant reference. Closing date for all posts is 11th January 1999.

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To advertise in this section please call the FINANCIAL team on 0171 293 2691.

NEW FILMS

THE PRINCE OF EGYPT (U)
Director: Brenda Chapman, Simon Wells, Steve Hickner
Voiced by: Val Kilmer, Ralph Fiennes, Michelle Pfeiffer
DreamWorks has chosen Jeffrey Katzenberg envisaged his cartoon *Life of Moses* "painted by Claude Monet and photographed by David Lean". The end result winds up as *The Ten Commandments* by way

of Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. West End: ABC Baker Street, ABC Tottenham Court Road, Barbican Screen, Clapham Picture House, Elephant & Castle Coronet, Empire Leicester Square, Hammersmith Virgin, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Ritz Cinema, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Fulham Road, Virgin Trocadero

GENERAL RELEASE

ANTZ (PG)
See *The Independent Recommends*, right.
West End: ABC Tottenham Court Road, Phoenix Cinema, Plaza, Ritz Cinema, Screen on the Green, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea, Virgin Trocadero

BABE: PIG IN THE CITY (U)
In the follow-up to *Babe*, knockabout comedy is kept to a minimum in favour of a bleak atmospheric fairytale. West End: ABC Baker Street, ABC Tottenham Court Road, Clapham Picture House, Elephant & Castle Coronet, Hammersmith Virgin, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Plaza, Rio Cinema, Ritz Cinema, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Fulham Road, Virgin Trocadero

BLADE (18)
A techno soundtrack bumps and grinds behind this monotonous arcade-game thriller about a New York vampire-killer tackling a power-crazed new bloodsucker. Noise and martial-arts action mask its tatty pedigree.
West End: Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Trocadero, Warner Village West End

THE BOYS (18)
Out of jail after serving a sentence for GBH, oldest "boy" Brett Sprague (David Wenham) moves back into his mum's drab suburban home, terrorises his girlfriend and turns his younger brothers into petty henchmen. *The Boys* spotlights the downside of life Down Under - it's potent, predatory stuff.
West End: Metro, Ritz Cinema

DANCING AT LUGHNASSA (PG)
Less a dance, more of a trudge, this Ireland-set saga is given backbone by Meryl Streep's regal performance. West End: Curzon Mayfair, Notting Hill Coronet, Rio Cinema

DEAD MAN'S CURVE (15)
Writer-director Dan Rosen must have had some terrible experiences at university. All the students at his nameless American college are trying to butcher each other, led into temptation by an obscure regulation that awards straight-A grades to the room-mates of suicides. Though not as deliciously nasty as the *Scream* films, *Dead Man's Curve* delivers a respectable quota of drive-in shocks.
West End: ABC Piccadilly

ELIZABETH (15)
Shekhar Kapur's follow-up to *Bandit Queen* is the story of a female figurehead struggling to gain purchase in a male world. But Kapur largely neglects the opportunities for fun in a story of independence triumphing over cruelty.
West End: ABC Tottenham Court Road, Odeon Haymarket, Odeon Mezzanine, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Virgin Fulham Road

FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS (18)
Terry Gilliam's adaptation of the book by Hunter S. Thompson is a drug-fuelled journalistic assignment. The film soon descends into a carnival of narcotic lechery with one stand-out being Johnny Depp - who brings Hunter S. Thompson into bald-headed, pigeon-toed life.
West End: ABC Baker Street, Empire Leicester Square, Odeon Camden Town, Ritz Cinema, Virgin Haymarket

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE (U)
See *The Independent Recommends*, right.
West End: Curzon Soho, Gate Notting Hill, Richmond Picturehouse, Ritz Cinema

LUGGAGE (PG)
An uncertain soap opera, focusing on the ebbs and flows within a Hasidic family in 1970s Holland. Fiftal as drama, the film comes to life as a showcase for its high-profile performers plus rising star Laura Fraser.
West End: ABC Swiss Centre, Curzon Minerva, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Phoenix Cinema, Richmond Picturehouse, Screen on Baker Street, Screen on the Hill

LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS (18)
Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels follows the lead of Tarantino, but the film's defining characteristic is its resilient morality.
West End: ABC Pantons Street, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Mezzanine, Warner Village West End

THE MASK OF ZORRO (PG)
This gaudy swashbuckler gallops full speed through 19th-century California in the company of Antonio Banderas's authentically Hispanic do-gooder. A bite-sized history lesson on West Coast politics struggles amid a lot of colourful duels and clattering set-pieces.
West End: Barbican Screen, Clapham Picture House, Elephant & Castle Coronet, Hammersmith Virgin, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Leicester Square, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Ritz Cinema, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Fulham Road

MULAN (U)
In Disney's animated feature, a girl disguises herself as a soldier to spare her ailing father from the certain death of combat. This set-up has got it all: a pro-active heroine who does not want to tend a man or pet woodland animals; a strong father-daughter relationship; honour and nobility; and, of course, cross-dressing. It's also one of the most visually innovative movies that Disney has ever made.
West End: Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Mezzanine, Odeon Swiss Cottage, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea, Warner Village West End

MY NAME IS JOE (15)
See *The Independent Recommends*, right.
West End: ABC Tottenham Court Road, Ritz Cinema, Screen on Baker Street, Screen on the Hill, Virgin Chelsea, Virgin Haymarket

THE NEGOTIATOR (15)
Samuel L. Jackson and Kevin Spacey go head to head in Gray's thrilling drama. The script has a predilection for lunk-headed swearing that sounds uneasy in the mouths of such articulate, rhetorical performers. West End: Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Marble Arch, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Fulham Road, Virgin Trocadero, Warner Village West End

OUT OF SIGHT (15)
George Clooney plays the law-breaking hero as a down-and-dirty version of Cary Grant, and turns in the best performance of his career so far. He seems to be a grown-up film star when most of Hollywood's male heart-throbs don't look old enough to get served in a pub. West End: Clapham Picture House, Empire Leicester Square, Gate Notting Hill, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Ritz Cinema, Screen on Baker Street, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea, Virgin Trocadero

A PERFECT MURDER (15)
With Hollywood awash with dumb re-makes, the news that Hitchcock's classic *Dial M for Murder* was to be rehashed did not bode well. But this is gold-plated trash: the sort of thing Hollywood does better than anyone else. West End: ABC Pantons Street, Warner Village West End

THE PHILADELPHIA STORY (U)
Sublime cinema. It's a fast-talking romantic comedy, of course, but there's nothing silly or trivial about it. George Cukor's movie has a strange and melancholy heart and Katherine Hepburn's unsatisfied heiress sheds real tears.
West End: Curzon Soho, Renoir

PLAYING GOD (18)
Cracker director Andy Wilson suffers a rude lesson in Hollywood politics with this glossy but garbled thriller about a junkie doctor (David Duchovny) embroiled with a gang of counterfeiters headed by a hammy Tim Hutton.
West End: Warner Village West End

RONIN (15)
See *The Independent Recommends*, right.
West End: Odeon Kensington, Odeon West End, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Fulham Road

RUSH HOUR (15)
Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker star in this hit-and-miss affair. West End: Elephant & Castle Coronet, Gate Notting Hill, Hammersmith Virgin, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Plaza, Ritz Cinema, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea, Virgin Trocadero, Warner Village West End

SLUMS OF BEVERLY HILLS (18)
See *The Independent Recommends*, right.
West End: ABC Piccadilly, ABC Shaftesbury Avenue

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE (18)
Once ridiculously held up as a video nasty, Tobe Hooper's thrif-shop chiller is, rather, a unholly celebration of the blood-lust urges within white-trash America, ushering a bunch of generic teens to their doom among a family of unemployed slaughtermen. Explicit violence is thin on the ground; instead it's the alien, voodoo mood which dominates. West End: ABC Shaftesbury Avenue

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY (15)
The latest comedy from the tasteless writer-director team of Peter and Bobby Farrelly. The film is basically a soft-centred romantic comedy of the kind that drifts out of Hollywood on a regular basis. The gags never amount to more than vulgarising on an unexceptionally bland cake.
West End: Odeon Mezzanine, Screen on the Green, Virgin Fulham Road, Virgin Haymarket

VELVET GOLDMINE (18)
Jonathan Rhys Meyers plays a Bowie-esque idol in glitter make-up; his friend and mentor Erick Wild (Ewan McGregor) is a self-destructive US rocker in the Low Reed-Iggy Pop mould. The story of how these characters are bound together is told in a film brimming with intelligent ideas.
West End: Curzon Soho, Rio Cinema

LA VIE REVUE DES ANGES (18)
(THE DREAM LIFE OF ANGELS)
Isa (Elodie Bouchez) is a gamine but impoverished drifter who meets Marie (Natacha Regnier) while tempting at a clothes sweatshop. They become friends and move in together in a stunning first feature for Erick Zouca.
West End: ABC Swiss Centre, Curzon Minerva, Phoenix Cinema, Screen on the Green

THE WISDOM OF CROCODILES (15)
Jude Law plays a contemporary vampire who wines and dines his victims before he goes for the jugular. West End: ABC Pantons Street

THE INDEPENDENT RECOMMENDS

THE FIVE BEST FILMS

My Name is Joe (15)
All that one would expect from a Ken Loach film - humour, indignation and emotional sympathy - driven by Peter Mullan's scarily intense performance as a recovering alcoholic.

Antz (PG)
Computer-animated comedy voiced by a stellar cast stars Woody Allen as a worker ant who becomes an unlikely opponent of the colony's totalitarian regime. Good fun, and Allen's best work in a while.

Slums of Beverly Hills (15)
"Amara Jenkins" feature debut is a modest but winning rite-of-passage movie about a family coping with poverty in LA's richest suburb. Alan Arkin gives an acting masterclass as the dad.

Ronin (15)
John Frankenheimer's action thriller is buttressed by a fine international cast (Robert De Niro, Jean Reno, Stellan Skarsgard), moody French locations and a clutch of supercharged car chases.

It's a Wonderful Life (U, Curzon Soho)
Despite its reputation as a national treasure, Frank Capra's hymn to smalltown selflessness is fraught with all kinds of contradictions and blind spots. James Stewart, granted a vision of how life would have been had he never been born, is magnificent in the lead role (above).

THE FIVE BEST PLAYS

Hindle Wakes
Royal Exchange, Manchester
Spectacularly refurbished after the 1996 bombing, this theatre bounces back in fine resilient form with the excellent production which had to be aborted then. To 9 Jan

Martin Guerre
West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds
It's third time lucky for this much-rewritten Boublil/Schönberg musical. In Conall Morrison's starkly involving production, it finally emerges as a tighter, magnificent show. To 13 Feb

The Invention of Love
Theatre Royal, Haymarket
Witty fantasia by Tom Stoppard on the twin passions of AE Housman: scholarship and an unavailable heterosexual friend.
To 4 Apr

Copenhagen
Cottesloe, National Theatre
Michael Frayn's profound and haunting meditation on science, morality and the mysteries of human motivation. To 27 Jan

The Boy Who Fell Into a Book
Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough
Typically witty and ingenious concept from Alan Ayckbourn (above) - here wearing his children's dramatist hat. To 9 Jan

THE FIVE BEST SHOWS

Louise Bourgeois Serpentine Gallery
Veteran French-American sculptress, still a leading light at 87, shows new installations in which a giant mother-spider presides over images of spinning and weaving, restoration and decay. To 10 Jan

Claude Lorrain British Museum
One hundred drawings by the great French classical landscape painter (above), including his remarkably vivid outdoor studies of woods and streams.
To 10 Jan

Bridget Riley Abbott Hall, Kendal
A small retrospective, spanning the career of top British abstractionist Riley - from the shimmering monochromes of her early Sixties Op Art fame, to colour, stripes, diagonals and curves.
To 31 Jan

Edward Burne-Jones Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
Centenary exhibition gathers together many favourites illustrating Burne-Jones's romantic and medievalist nether world. To 17 Jan

Chris Offill Whitworth Gallery, Manchester
The 1998 Turner Prize winner is an upbeat original, his surfaces dense and decorative, with swirls of dots, eyes. Afro and black icons, and incorporating mutant balls of elephant dung. To 24 Jan

CINEMA

WEST END

ABC BAKER STREET
(0870 9020418) @ Baker Street
Babe: Pig in the City 12.00pm, 6.20pm
Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas 1.30pm, 8.30pm
The Prince of Egypt 1.00pm, 4pm, 6.20pm, 8.35pm

ABC PANTONS STREET
(0870 902 0404) @ Piccadilly
Circus The Last Days of Disco 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6pm, 8.25pm
Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels 1.10pm, 3.35pm, 6pm, 8.30pm
The Wisdom of Crocodiles 1.10pm, 3.30pm, 6pm, 8.30pm

ABC PICCADILLY
(0171-287 4322 (from 1pm)) @ Piccadilly
Circus Dead Man's Curve 4.05pm, 8.45pm
Hammam The Turkish Bath 1.25pm, 3.50pm, 6.10pm, 8.30pm
Victory 1.10pm, 6.10pm

ABC SHAFTESBURY AVENUE
(0870 902 0402) @ Leicester Square
Babe: Pig in the City 12.00pm, 6.20pm
Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas 1.30pm, 8.30pm
Texas Chainsaw Massacre 1.35pm, 3.55pm, 6.35pm, 8.30pm

ABC SWISS CENTRE
(0870 902 0403) @ Leicester Square
Circus Angel Shark 1.30pm, 5.20pm, 7.15pm, 9.10pm
The Governor 1.45pm, 4.05pm, 6.25pm, 8.45pm
Left Luggage 1.30pm, 6.55pm
Rien Ne Va Plus 4.45pm, 9.15pm
La Vie Revee des Anges 3.45pm, 6.05pm, 8.25pm

ABC TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD
(0870 902 0414) @ Tottenham Court Road
Antz 1.15pm, 6.35pm
Babe: Pig in the City 1.05pm, 3.40pm, Elizabeth 3.30pm, 8.55pm
My Name is Joe 6.25pm, 9.30pm
The Prince of Egypt 1.20pm, 3.50pm, 6.50pm, 9.30pm

BARBICAN SCREEN
(0171-638 8891) @ Barbican
The Mask of Zorro 3pm, 6pm, 8.40pm
The Prince of Egypt 3pm, 5.30pm, 8pm

CHELSEA CINEMA
(0171-351 3742) @ Sloane Square
On Cornhill La Chanson 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm, 8.35pm

CLAPHAM PICTURE HOUSE
(0171-498 4323) @ Clapham Common
Babe: Pig in the City 1.45pm, 4.15pm, 6.45pm
The Mask of Zorro 12.45pm, 3.30pm, 6.15pm, 9pm
Out of Sight 9.30pm
The Prince of Egypt 2.30pm, 4.45pm, 7pm, 9.15pm

CURZON MAYFAIR
(0171-369 1720) @ Green Park
Dances 12.00pm, 2pm, 4.15pm, 6.30pm, 9pm

CURZON MINERVA
(0171-369 1723) @ Hyde Park Corner/Kingsbridge
Left Luggage 2.50pm, 5.50pm
La Vie Revee des Anges 4.40pm, 8.40pm

CURZON SOHO
(0171-734 2255 (12pm-6pm)) @ Leicester Square
Circus The Last Days of Disco 1.30pm, 6.45pm
Henry Fool 4.10pm, 9pm
It's a Wonderful Life 1pm, 6.30pm
The Last Days of Disco 2.15pm, 9.30pm
The Philadelphia Story 12.00pm, 4.30pm, 7pm, 9.15pm

ELPHANT AND CASTLE CORONET
(0171-703 4968) @ Elephant & Castle
Babe: Pig in the City 1.50pm, 3.45pm
The Mask of Zorro 2pm, 5.15pm, 8.10pm
The Prince of Egypt 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.20pm, 8.35pm
Rush Hour 6.30pm, 8.45pm

EMPIRE LEICESTER SQUARE
(0171-494 4133) @ Leicester Square
Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas 12.00pm, 3.30pm, 6.10pm, 9pm
Out of Sight 12.10pm, 2.55pm, 5.50pm, 8.35pm
The Prince of Egypt 10.45am, 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm, 8.30pm

GATE NOTTING HILL
(0171-727 4043) @ Notting Hill Gate
It's a Wonderful Life 4.10pm (+ Short: Whoosh!) Out of Sight 1.40pm, 6.40pm
Rush Hour 9.05pm

HAMMERSMITH VIRGIN
(0870-907 0718) @ Ravenscourt Park/Hammersmith
Babe: Pig in the City 12.45pm, 4.20pm
Ensign of the State 6.20pm, 9pm
The Mask of Zorro 12.00pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm
The Parent Trap 12.10pm, 3pm, 5.50pm, 8.40pm
The Prince of Egypt 12.15pm, 2.20pm, 4.30pm, 6.30pm, 8.30pm
Rush Hour 6.30pm, 9pm

ICA CINEMA
(0171-930 3647) @ Charing Cross
Sogni d'Oro 5pm, 7pm, 9pm
Le Voyage Imaginaire 6.30pm, 8.30pm (+ Short)

METRO
(0171-734 1506) @ Piccadilly
Circus/Leicester Square The Boys 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm, 8.30pm
Fire 2pm, 4.15pm, 6.30pm, 8.45pm

NOTTING HILL CORONET
(0171-727 6705) @ Notting Hill Gate
Dancing at Lughnassa 2.30pm, 4.30pm, 6.30pm, 8.45pm

ODEON CAMDEN TOWN
(0870-050007) @ Camden Town
Babe: Pig in the City 11.55am, 1.55pm, 3.55pm
The Mask of Zorro 11.55am, 2.40pm, 4.40pm, 8.30pm
Mulan 12.05pm, 2.50pm, 5.30pm, 8.25pm
Out of Sight 5.55pm, 8.40pm
The Parent Trap 12.15pm, 2.55pm
The Prince of Egypt 12.00pm, 2.25pm, 4.40pm, 6.55pm, 9.10pm
Rush Hour 4.40pm, 7.15pm, 9.10pm, 12.30pm, 2.15pm, 4.30pm, 6.40pm, 9.05pm

ODEON HAYMARKET
(0870-050007) @ Piccadilly
Circus Elizabeth 2.15pm, 5pm, 7.45pm

ODEON KENSINGTON
(0870-050007) @ High Street
Kensington Babe: Pig in the City 1.30pm, 3.55pm
The Mask of Zorro 2.25pm, 5.40pm, 8.55pm
Out of Sight 12.20pm, 3.20pm, 6.20pm, 9.20pm
The Parent Trap 12.00pm, 3pm, 6.05pm, 9.10pm
The Prince of Egypt 12.00pm, 2.25pm, 4.50pm, 7.15pm, 9.40pm
Ronin 6.20pm, 9.15pm
Rush Hour 1.55pm, 4.30pm, 7.05pm, 9.40pm

ODEON LEICESTER SQUARE
(0870-050007) @ Leicester Square
The Mask of Zorro 12.00pm, 1.40pm, 2.30pm, 5.25pm, 6.30pm, 12.45pm

ODEON MARBLE ARCH
(0870-050007) @ Marble Arch
Babe: Pig in the City 12.15pm, 3.05pm
The Mask of Zorro 11.50pm, 2.50pm, 5.55pm, 9pm
The Negotiator 8.55pm Out of Sight 6pm, 8.55pm
The Parent Trap 12.15pm, 3.05pm, 6pm, 8.55pm
The Prince of Egypt 11.45am, 2.05pm, 4.25pm, 6.45pm, 9.10pm
Rush Hour 11.50am, 2.30pm, 4.40pm, 7.05pm, 9.30pm

ODEON MEZZANINE
(0870-050007) @ Leicester Square
Elizabeth 12.35pm, 3.05pm, 5.35pm, 8.20pm
Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels 1.25pm, 3.55pm, 6.20pm, 8.50pm
Les Misérables 2.55pm, 5.30pm, 8.15pm
Mulan 2.10pm, 4.20pm, 6.55pm, 9.25pm
There's Something About Mary 12.45pm, 3.15pm, 5.45pm, 8.20pm

ODEON SWISS COTTAGE
(0870-050007) @ Swiss Cottage
Babe: Pig in the City 1.25pm, 3.45pm, Elizabeth 8.30pm
Left Luggage 6.25pm, 8.45pm
The Mask of Zorro 1.40pm, 4.55pm, 8pm
Mulan 12.45pm Out of Sight 3pm, 5.25pm, 8.20pm
The Parent Trap 12.15pm, 3.05pm, 5.45pm
The Prince of Egypt 1.40pm, 3.25pm, 5.55pm, 8.25pm
Rush Hour 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.30pm, 8.50pm

ODEON WEST END
(0870-050007) @ Leicester Square
The Parent Trap 12.15pm, 3pm, 5.40pm, 8.30pm, 12.35pm, 3.10pm, 5.45pm, 8.25pm

PEPSI MAX CINEMA
(0171-494 4133) @ Piccadilly
Circus Everest 12.35pm, 2.40pm, 4.45pm, 7pm, 9.05pm
T-Rex: Back to the Cretaceous (3-D) 11.30am, 1.35pm, 3.40pm, 5.45pm, 8pm, 10.05pm

PHOENIX CINEMA
(0181-444 6789) @ East Finchley
Antz 12.00pm, 1.50pm, 3.20pm, 4.20pm, 5.50pm, 7pm, 8.20pm, 9.30pm

PLAZA
(0990-888990) @ Piccadilly
Circus Antz 1.55pm, 3.30pm
Babe: Pig in the City 12.45pm, 3.10pm, 5.30pm
Rush Hour 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.30pm, 9pm
Saving Private Ryan 7.50pm
The Truman Show 6pm, 7.30pm
Twilight 1pm, 6.30pm, 6.15pm, 8.40pm

RITZY CINEMA
(0171-733 2229) BR @ Brixton
Antz 12.05pm, 2.05pm
Babe: Pig in the City 12.10pm, 2.25pm, 4.25pm
The Boys 7pm
East Side Story 2.45pm
It's a Wonderful Life 4.15pm (+ Short: Whoosh!) 4.30pm, 6.15pm, 8.55pm
My Name is Joe 8.50pm (+ Short: The Man Who Held His Breath) Out of Sight 6.35pm, 9.15pm (+ Short: Vacuum) The Prince of Egypt 12.00pm, 2.15pm, 4.30pm, 6.45pm, 9pm
Rush Hour 4pm, 6.50pm, 9.20pm

SCREEN ON BAKER STREET
(0171-935 2772) @ Baker Street
Left Luggage 2.30pm, 4.40pm, 6.50pm, 9pm
My Name is Joe 2.20pm, 6.40pm
Out of Sight 2.40pm, 8.40pm

SCREEN ON THE GREEN
(0171-226 3520) @ Angel
Antz 3.30pm
La Vie Revee des Anges 6.15pm, 8.40pm

SCREEN ON THE HILL
(0171-435 3366) @ Belsize Park
Left Luggage 2.30pm, 4.30pm, 6.40pm
My Name is Joe 8.50pm

UCI WHITELEYS
(0870-907 0711) @ Queensway
Antz 4pm
Babe: Pig in the City 3.50pm, 4.50pm, 7.10pm
Blade 6.20pm, 9.10pm
The Mask of Zorro 2.50pm, 5.40pm, 8.50pm
The Negotiator 6.10pm, 9pm
Out of Sight 3.40pm, 6.30pm, 9.20pm
The Parent Trap 3pm, 5.50pm, 8.40pm
The Prince of Egypt 3.30pm, 6pm, 8.30pm
Ronin 9.35pm
Rush Hour 4.40pm, 7pm, 9.30pm

VIRGIN CHELSEA
(0870-907 0710) @ Sloane Square
Antz 12.30pm, 2.30pm, 4.15pm, 6.30pm
Mulan 12.45pm
My Name is Joe 8.45pm
Out of Sight 2.45pm, 5.30pm, 9pm
The Parent Trap 12.15pm, 3pm, 5.45pm, 8.30pm
Rush Hour 2pm, 5pm, 7.15pm, 9.30pm

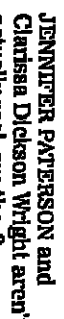
VIRGIN FULHAM ROAD
(0870-907 0711) @ South Kensington
Babe: Pig in the City 1pm, 3pm, 5pm
Elizabeth 2pm, 5.30pm, 8.20pm
The Mask of Zorro 12.20pm, 3.10pm, 6.10pm, 9.10pm
The Negotiator 12.40pm, 3.35pm, 6.25pm, 9.20pm
The Prince of Egypt 12.10pm, 2.15pm, 4.25pm, 6.40pm, 9.30pm
Ronin 7pm, 9.30pm
There's Something About Mary 12.35pm, 5.50pm, 9.20pm

VIRGIN HAYMARKET
(0870-907 0712) @ Piccadilly
Circus Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas 12.45pm, 3.20pm, 6pm, 8.35pm
My Name is Joe 12.55pm, 3.30pm, 6.10pm, 8.45pm
There's Something About Mary 12.30pm, 5.10pm, 8.25pm, 11.10pm

VIRGIN TROCADERO
(0870-907 0716) @ Piccadilly
Circus Antz 12.10pm, 2.10pm, 4.05pm, 6.10pm, 8.30pm
Babe: Pig in the City 12.20pm, 2.20pm, 4.20pm, 6.20pm, 8.20pm
The Negotiator 2pm, 5.30pm, 8.30pm
Out of Sight 12.00pm, 2.50pm, 5.40pm, 8.30pm
The Prince of Egypt 12.50pm, 3.20pm, 5.50pm, 8.20pm, 10.50pm
The Truman Show 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.10pm, 9pm

WARNER VILLAGE WEST END
(0171-437 4343) @ Leicester Square
Blade 1.20pm, 4pm, 6.40pm, 9.20pm
The Exorcist (25th Anniversary Release) 1.30pm, 3.20pm, 6pm, 8.40pm
Lethal Weapon 4 12.00pm, 2.50pm, 5.40pm, 8.30pm
Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels 1.20pm, 3

TELEVISION REVIEW



then the Ladies leave always, tread enthusiastically on this kind of yuckness. One of their principal enthusiasms is for butchery, and they never seem more happy than when they're preparing food which congeals up blood on the kitchen work surfaces. Any of last night's viewers, wishing to see them perform their usual antics, with their usual, and very, very, odd, and to the satisfied with

man's head." Charles knew what her colleague was on about. "The Mongols," she exclaimed. "That's right, the Mongols!" breathed Jennifer, as though she'd just remembered that she went to school with them. "Wonder if we meant the Bechthore or the Yikasthe Mongols?"

If their yawning accidentally

BBQZ

ITV Carlton

Channel 4

Channel 5

11.40 The New Adventures of Superman (F) (S) (T) (7036782), **12.25 Wildcat** (T) (9893385), **12.50 Weather Show** (S) (T) (72766607), **1.00 News: Weather** (83394), **1.30 Regional News and Weather** (45083761), **1.40 Neighborhoods** (S) (70709388), **2.05 Baltimore Home** (S) (98867492), **2.35 Die Spiel** (S) (72733304), **3.50 Children's BBC: Noddy** (F) (S) (8605607), **3.30 Casper** (F) (S) (8389865), **3.50 Chuckle/Blam** (S) (946440), **4.10 Gai You** (S) (2340005), **4.35 The Quaggs News** (8256968), **5.00 Newsworld** (S) (T) (2052743), **5.30 Blue Peter** (S) (T) (6775550), **5.35 Neighbours** (S) (T) (675052), **6.00 News: Weather** (T) (894).

7.30 Annual Sanctuary. John Craven meets some of the animals being cared for at the Wildlife Waystation in California. (S) (7) 6300.

8.00 The Life of Birds. In the concluding programme, David Attenborough looks at how birds cope with living in some of the harshest and most hostile places on the planet - from the sand gouges of the Namibian desert to the black vultures nesting on the 91st-floor balcony of a skyscraper in Sao Paulo, Brazil. (S) (7) 083701.

8.30 The National Lottery. (S) (7) 624520.

9.00 News Regional News Weather. (7) 6507.

10:45 War and Peace. Last of the six-part docu-soap, with character girl Katrina falling out with her assistant, Camilla (S) (7) (46827).

11:15 Robbie Williams - Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em
The former, like that pop showman allows cameras along as he records the second album (S) (7) (225529).

11:15 Faces Of Lethal (S) (7) (672856).

12:15 Film That River's Touch (Cill Owen 1966 UK). Macdonald and Wigg's second last-in-successful attempt to launch themselves onto the big screen. Jewels splice their French lily (468231).

1:50 Johna BBC News 24 (7/10/073), to 7am.

4.20 Film Site Work a Yellow Ribbon (John Ford 1949 US). BBC2's meaty Christmas season of westerns continues with John Ford's siegled masterpiece, the second in the "cavalry trilogy," with John Wayne dying career-beset performer, Wayne is charged with escorting a couple of ladies through restless Indian country in the aftermath of Cheater's defeat at Little Big Horn. The film at its best when none of the characters are trying to be either amorous or funny, although the real hero of the film is Monument Valley, as captured to Oscar-winning effect by Whitton Hoof (T) 7583/9120.

7.30 Beowulf. Animated version of the epic Old English poem, featuring the voices of Derek, Jacob, Joseph Flannery and Timothy West (S) (T) 4422.

8.00 Gary Rhodes' Perfect Christmas. A bit late for most of us who have already planned and shopped for our Christmas lunch, Rhodes promises a no-fuss meal for 12 people, and roast turkey in under four hours (4472).

8.30 Home Front. Josselyn James investigates seasonal home decorations in New England, USA. Plus, Christmas gifts for dogs. How about a long walk? (S) (T) 7507.

9.00 Dad's Army. Christmas theme: Grand comedy. Marmalade's plectrum decides to give a turkey dinner to

11:15 CHOICE Seven Samurai (Akira Kurosawa, 1956, Japan). The magnificent seven defend a peasant village in Kurosawa's hugely enjoyable masterpiece. See *Film a Day*, below. (Followed by *Weatherview*) (88799830). To 250am.

12.20 Your Show (669/507, 12.20) News, Weather, (T) (86282), 1.00 London Today (T) (86923) **1.30 Cross** (5782), 2.10 (T) (86283), 2.00 Wheel of Fortune, (S) (T) (86284), 2.30 (T) News Headlines, (T) (86856), **2.45** London Today (T) (8657820), **2.40** Sports, (R) (S) (T) (7502782), **4.40** Survival Special, (S) (T) (638-1589).

5.40 News/Weather (T) (86194).

6.00 London Tonight. Regional news updates for the

7.30 Coronation Street. Pila tips off the Duckworths about Alec's grand scheme. Jilly goes into labour (expect a baby on Christmas Day) (T) (528).

8.00 Des O'Connor Tonight. The perms-slurting chat go gives a big welcome to Joe Pasquaia, Norman Wisdom, Spike Mason and Billy Pearce. Music from The Spics Gals and Barry Manilow. (S) (7084).

9.00 Cardiacal. Derek Jacobi returns as the slurring medical monk. In the first of two new mysteries.

10.30 **ITN News Weather** (1) (635033).

10.45 **London Tonight** (7) (608102).

10.85 **The Things You Do for Love**. Another dramatised true-life romance. *David of God's Acre* Mellow wrote this one about a 19th-century woman who thinks she's being conked from beyond the grave by a soldier she fell in love with as a 15-year-old (222568).

12.00 **Early On**. **Thin Lips, the Tale of the Babylonian Story** (Zulu **Bantu** on 1890 US). The true story of world-class leotaller, *la Babylon*, who resorted to drugs after injury forced her out of the 1980 Olympics (5) (7156223).

1.40 **The World Music Awards 1988** (1) (644930), 3.41-4.40 **ITN Night**. The Hummed Fehman (988385-9), 4.00-4.05 **ITN screen** (668838), 4.40 **Cybernet** (33035-45), to 5.05am

2.05 The Hedgehog in the Fog (R) (TV) (7/7590897, 2.40)
 Rai and Mai (T/750033), 2.30 Frances Bissella
 Westcountry Christmas (S) (S) (6/7), 3.00 Wine
 Hunt (TV) (24/9), 3.30 Top Stories (V) (4/2), 4.00 Fillets
 to One Hinge (M) (2/5), 4.30 Countdown (TV)
 (5/43504), 4.35 Rick Lake Live (S) (TV) (7/35859,
 5.30 Pet
 Paradise America (TV) (4/9).

7.30 The Bear's Tale. Documentary about the making of Channel 4's new Big Brother-style Bigg-squared Christmas edition, *The Bear*, which screens tomorrow afternoon (7) (58).

8.00 Brocade Christmas Special. Three words to send shudders down the spine. Reunited marriage: whether Bev is determined to muscle in on Ron's relationship with Anita (5) (7) (58).

8.30 The Real Holiday Show. Two words go on a camping trip to the site of World's, and a weekly mental collapse like 15 of their friends on honeymoon with them (5) (7) (59).

9.00 The Contentionist. Documentary following an alcoholic as he undertakes a controversial, following an

10.30 Harry Hill's Christmas Sleigh Ride (7) (R303).

11.00 Bob and Margaret. Animation (7) (4782).

11.30 Big to Differ (70501). 12.05 The Comedy Lab (9428789). 12.55 The 1980 MOBO Awards (980250).

2.15 FILM When the Wind Blows (Jimmy T. Murkemi 1988 UK, Anti-nuclear animation. Ewe, pensiveness, Jim and Hilda Blodge (voiced by Peggy Ashcroft and John Mills) try to cope with a nuclear holocaust (7) (65657).

3.45 FILM Wake Up Screaming (4) Bruce Humphreys (1981 US). Whoabout (7648657). To 5.00am.

3.30 FAMILY Home for Christmas (Peter McClebb, 1990 US). Gullible seasonal fare. This comedy dramatizes Mickey Rooney as an old-time party thief who is caught breaking into a car during the holiday season and forced to do work for his owner to the value of the damage. Yip, he befriends the victims six-year-old daughter. (TV) (#45858).

5.20 The Roseanne Show (9925120).

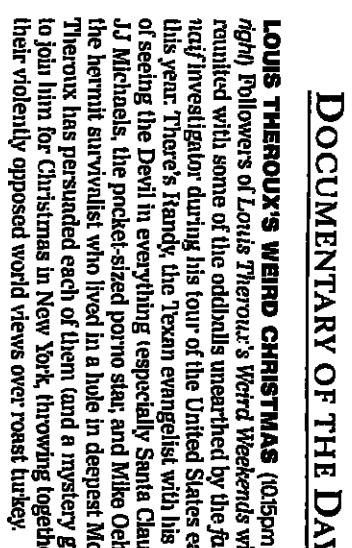
7:30 The Best of Peppé (Channel 5's version of the top of the *Peppé* Christmas special, which comes in two parts [the second next Wednesday] (S) (224101).

10:40 The Movie Chart Show. Tonight's show has a special 'Yields' theme and features some of the biggest turkeys of the year, apparently. (S) (220225).

11:15 100 Per Cent Guide to Sex. One hundred specialist questions on the subject of sex. Can't wait to see the contestants. (S418633).

11:45 Jenny Eclair: The Platinum Collection (445304), 100 NHL Ice Hockey (3420827), 4:40 Club Class (3704227), **5:05 Move On Up** (3705250), 5:30am.

DOCUMENTARY OF THE DAY



FILM OF THE DAY

1

